



*Whatcom County
Point In Time Homeless Count*

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City of Bellingham

2005 Homeless Count Goals

- Conduct survey for 2005 HUD Continuum of Care funding
- Establish baseline data for Whatcom County
- Provide useful data for service providers
- Identify potential unmet needs for the county's homeless
- Identify trends occurring in our county re: homelessness
- Conduct further analysis of the data
- Increase count participation each year
- Add to and update our list of known service providers

Organization Participation

- 80 service providers received a letter to participate
- 43 entities participated
- New participants
 - All county and city Law Enforcement
 - All School Districts in the county
 - Emergency room (Social Services) at St. Joseph's Hospital
 - Various food banks and meal programs around the county
- Participants who collected data for the entire week
 - School districts
 - Law enforcement

Count Participants

- Food Banks and Meal Programs
- School Districts
- Law Enforcement
- Government Service Providers
- Non-Profit Service Providers
- Church-affiliated Programs
- Housing Providers
- Medical Services Providers



Variables to Consider

- Whatcom County's location
 - Departure point on I-5 for Canada and Alaska may attract out of town homeless
 - Bellingham is a regional center and may attract homeless people
- Uncounted Individuals
 - Some populations in our county double up with family members or friends.
 - Rural areas of Whatcom County attract seasonal workers and those living in forests and rural areas.
 - If the national figure of 1% of a total population is homeless is true, then based on that figure, there could be as many as 1,765 homeless people
 - Street homeless if they aren't accessing services
- Timing of the count
 - Beginning of the year/post holidays
 - Climatic and work force variables from season to season

2005 Homeless Count Results

- Percentages and Gender of Individuals

- 40% of all individuals counted were children.
- 57% were men and 43% were women.
- 75% of the people counted were part of a family household.
25% were lone individuals.



- Length of Homelessness

- 75% were homeless one month or less.
- Less than 25% of households responding were homeless more than a year.

- Disabilities

- The disability most listed was mental health by a wide margin.
- Unmet medical and dental needs also figured prominently with 14% listing physical/medical disability and 11% listing unmet dental needs.
- 16% listed substance abuse as a disability: 61% male and 38% female.

2005 Homeless Count Results

- Reason for Homelessness
 - Reasons most cited: drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, inability to pay rent/mortgage, mental illness, and job loss.
- Status of Housing
 - 33% of clients responding live in transitional housing
 - Nearly 25% live temporarily with others
 - About 20% live in emergency shelters.
- Domestic Violence
 - 25% of individuals responding listed domestic violence as a cause of homelessness. 60% of those in this situation were women with 35% under age 18.
 - Of the individuals responding, 33% listed family breakup and domestic violence as reasons for becoming homeless.



2005 Homeless Count Results

- Substance Abuse
 - 36 individuals were officially "disabled" by substance abuse (HUD defines this as years and years of chronic addiction with no hope of recovery).
 - 138 people in households lost their housing because of a problems related to substance use.
- Lack of Health Care
 - 25% listed a mental health disability.
 - 25% responded that they have unmet physical, medical, or dental needs.



2005 Homeless Count Results

- Veterans
 - 8% responded that someone in their family has served in active duty in the U.S. armed forces.
 - Veterans commonly experience inadequate wages, lack of affordable housing, and lack of accessible, affordable health care as major barriers to stability.
- HIV/AIDS
 - Less than 2% listed HIV/AIDS as a disability: 16 males and 4 females.
- Criminal Convictions
 - 9% (60 males and 13 females) had criminal convictions of a felony, misdemeanor, or were discharged from an institution/jail as a reason for homelessness.



2005 Homeless Count Results

- School District numbers
- Bellingham -
 - Nooksack -
 - Meridian -
 - Blaine -
 - Mt. Baker -
 - Lynden -
- Location of homeless in our community
 - 77% of the 634 homeless who responded to this question call Bellingham home. 20% didn't respond to the question.



Photo by Taylor Phifer

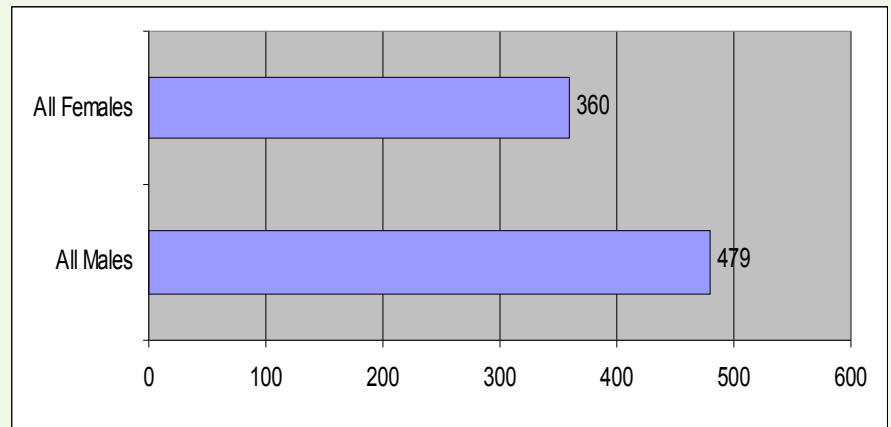
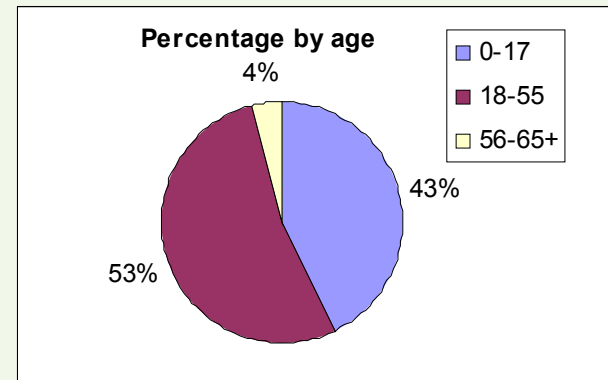
Data Obtained from the Forms

- Gender and age
- Distribution of homeless by zip code
- Disabilities experienced by the homeless
- Current housing status
- Homelessness length of time
- Situations causing homelessness
- Sources of household income
- Length of homelessness

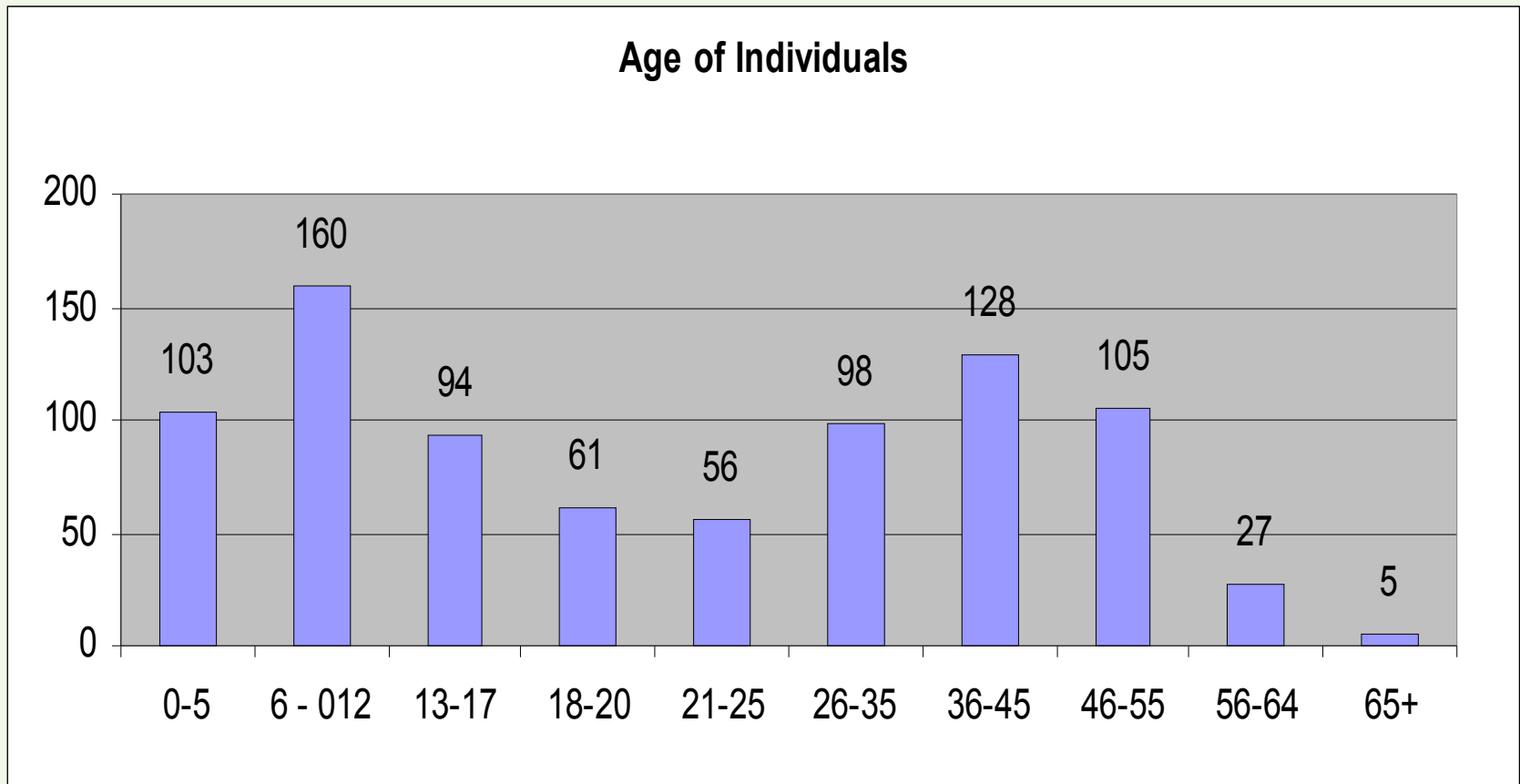


Population Breakdown

- 839 individuals counted
- 40% under age 18
- 479 were males = 57%
- 360 were females = 43%



Breakdown by Age



Zip Code Information

Primary state of residence

- 541 listed Washington
- 41 listed out of state

Breakdown by zip code

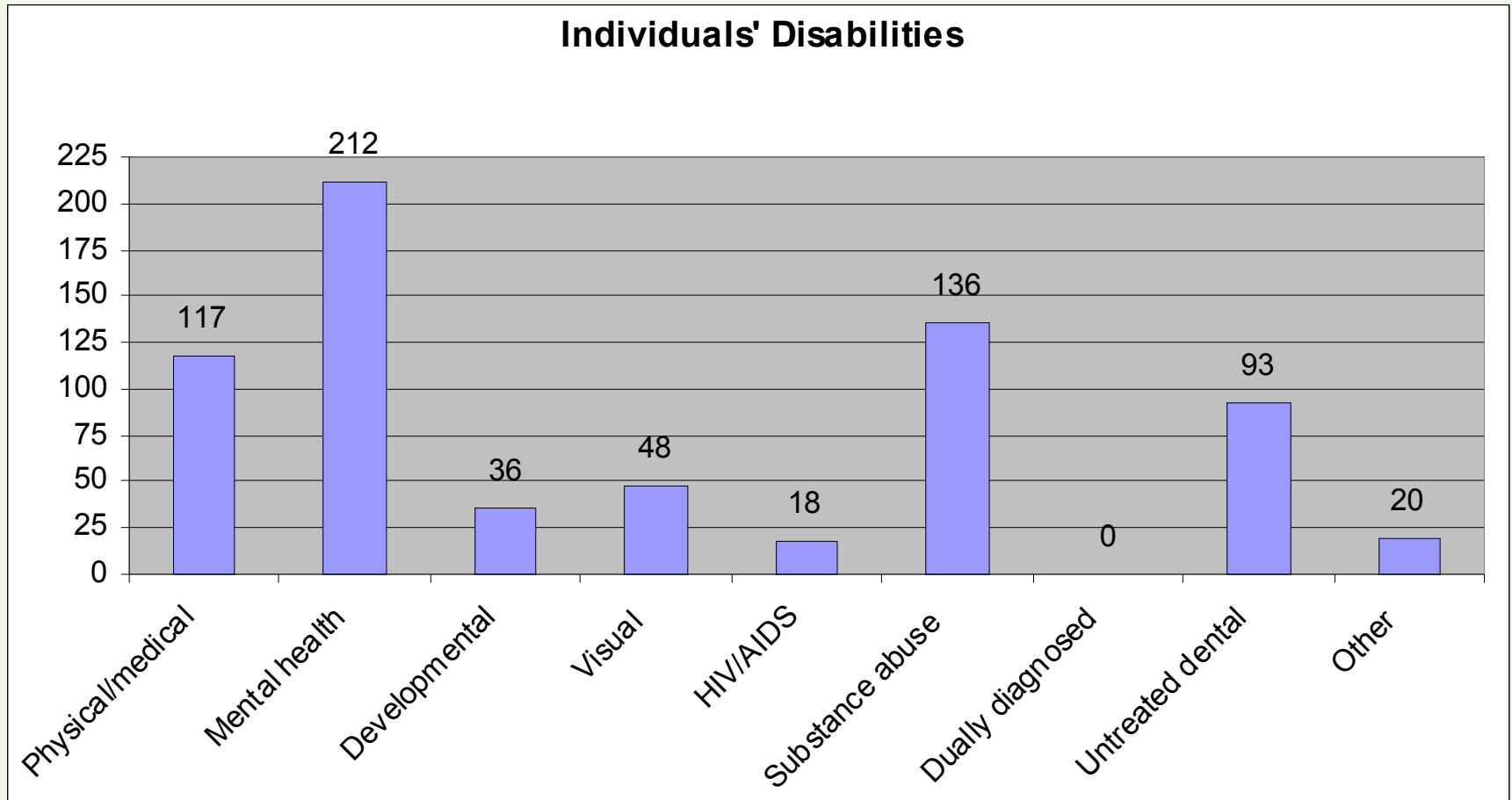
- Bellingham - 351
- Blaine - 132
- Deming - 110
- Everson - 105
- Ferndale - 66
- Lynden - 41
- Nooksack - 18

(77% from Bellingham)

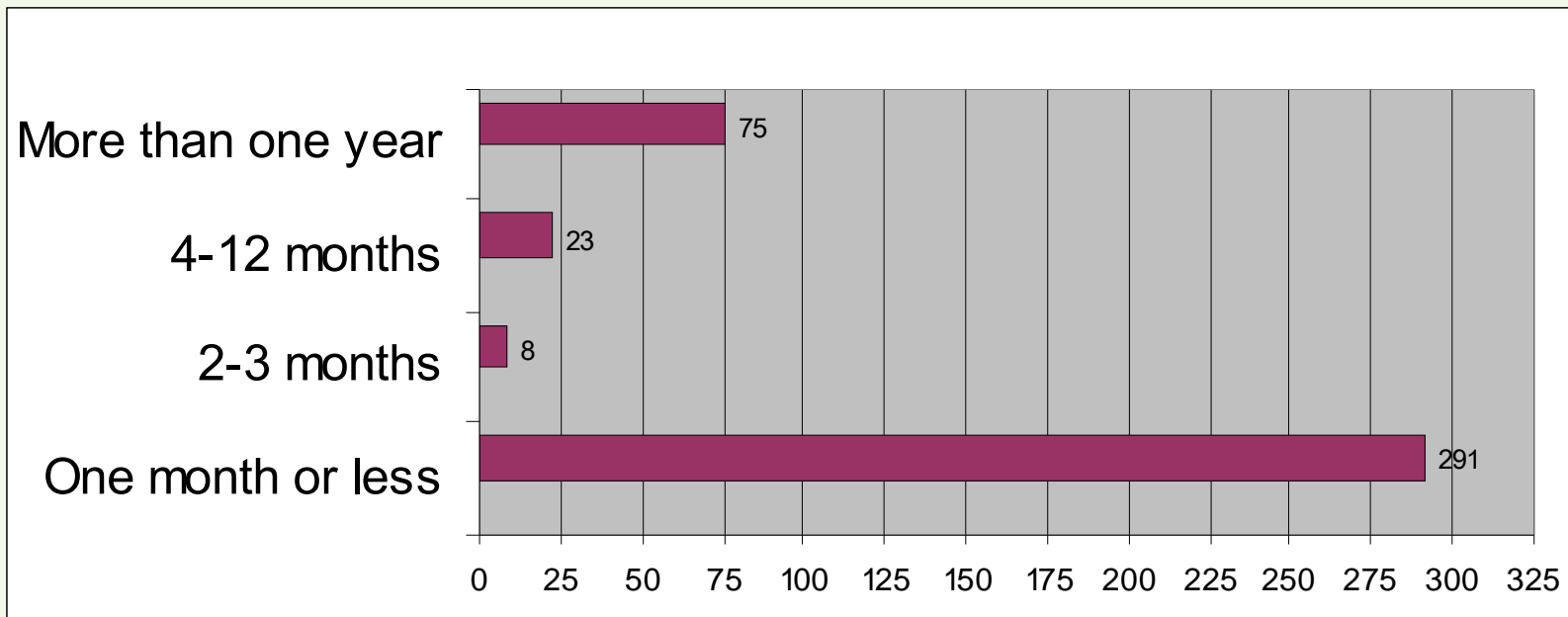


Photo by Taylor Phifer

Individuals w/ Disabilities

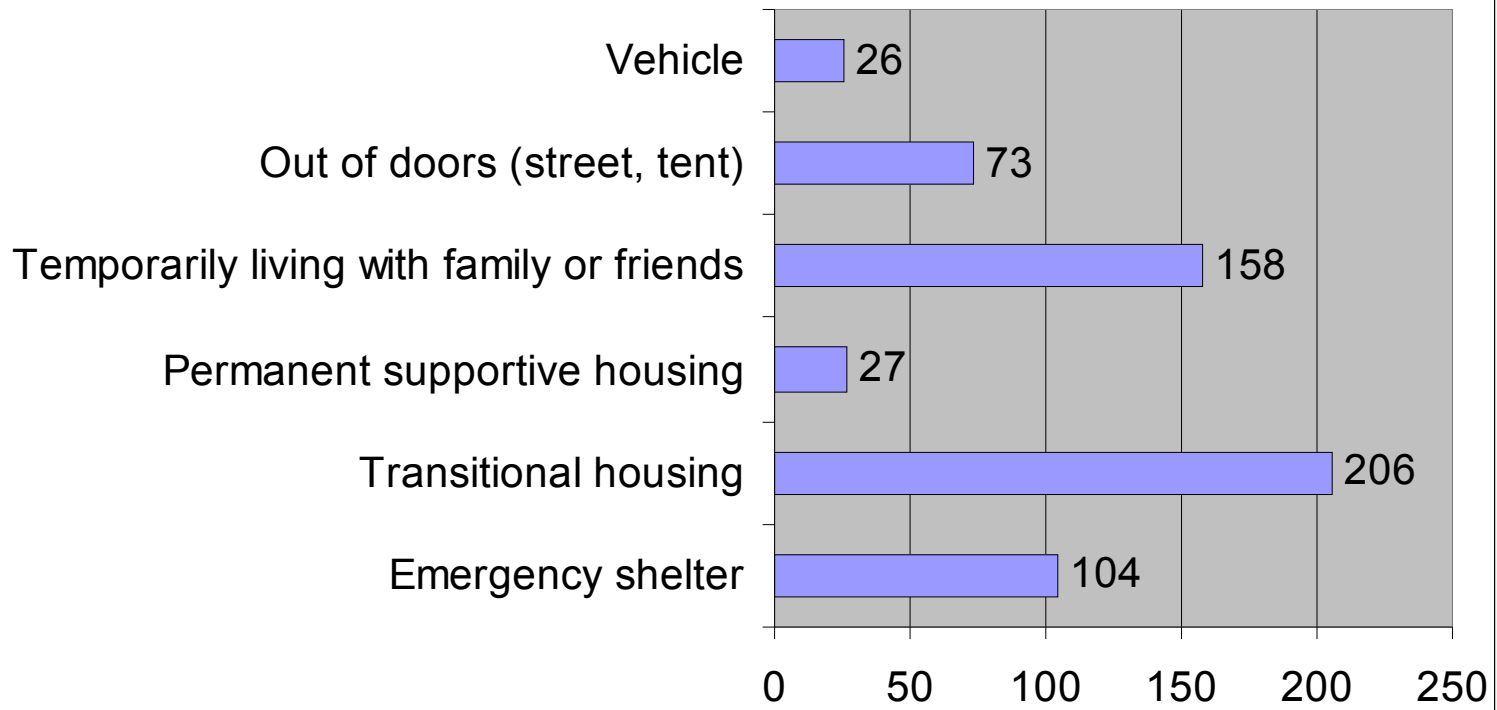


Length of Homelessness



Current Housing Status

Current Housing Status



Situations Causing Homelessness

Leading Causes

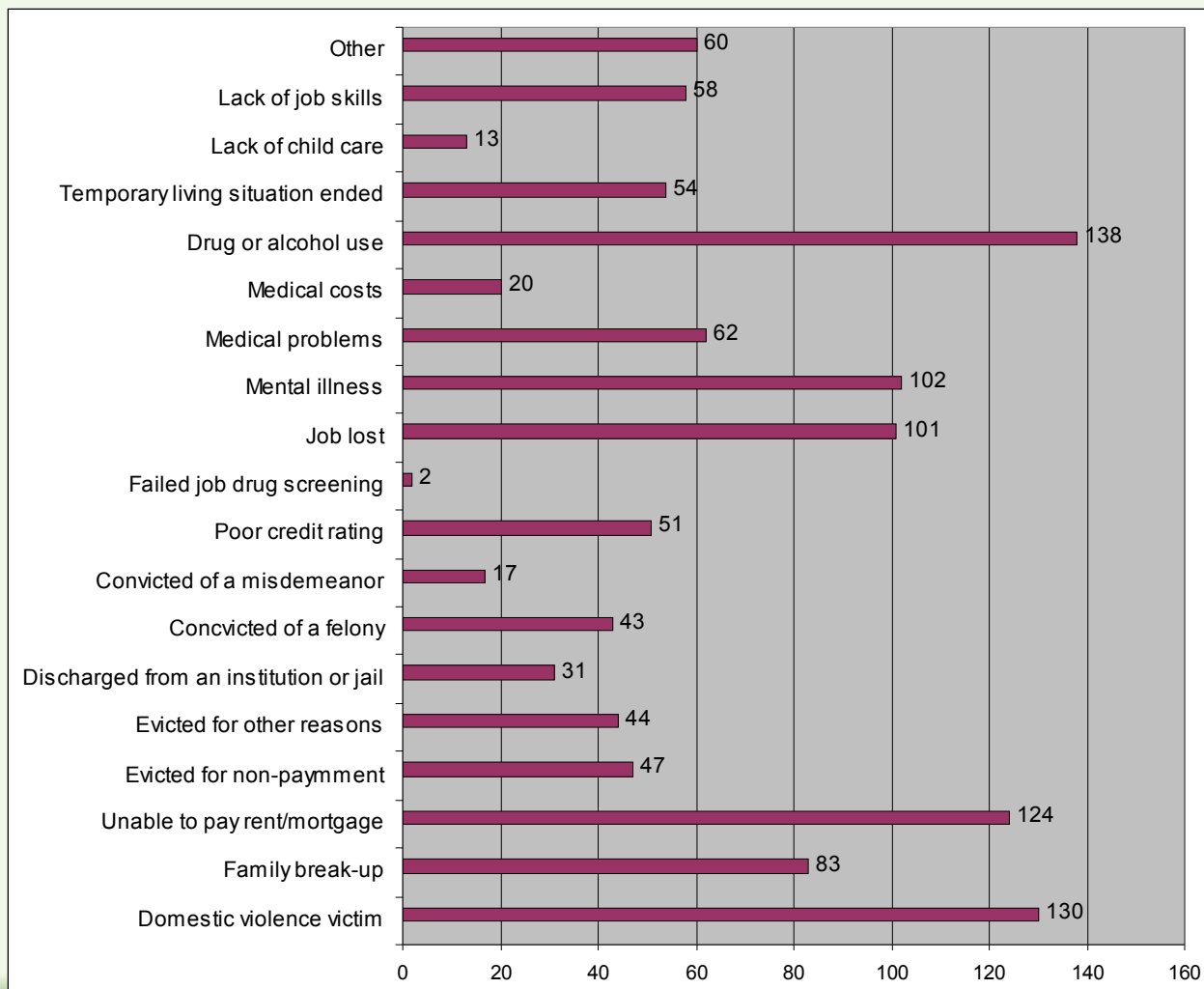
Drug/Alcohol Abuse

Domestic Violence

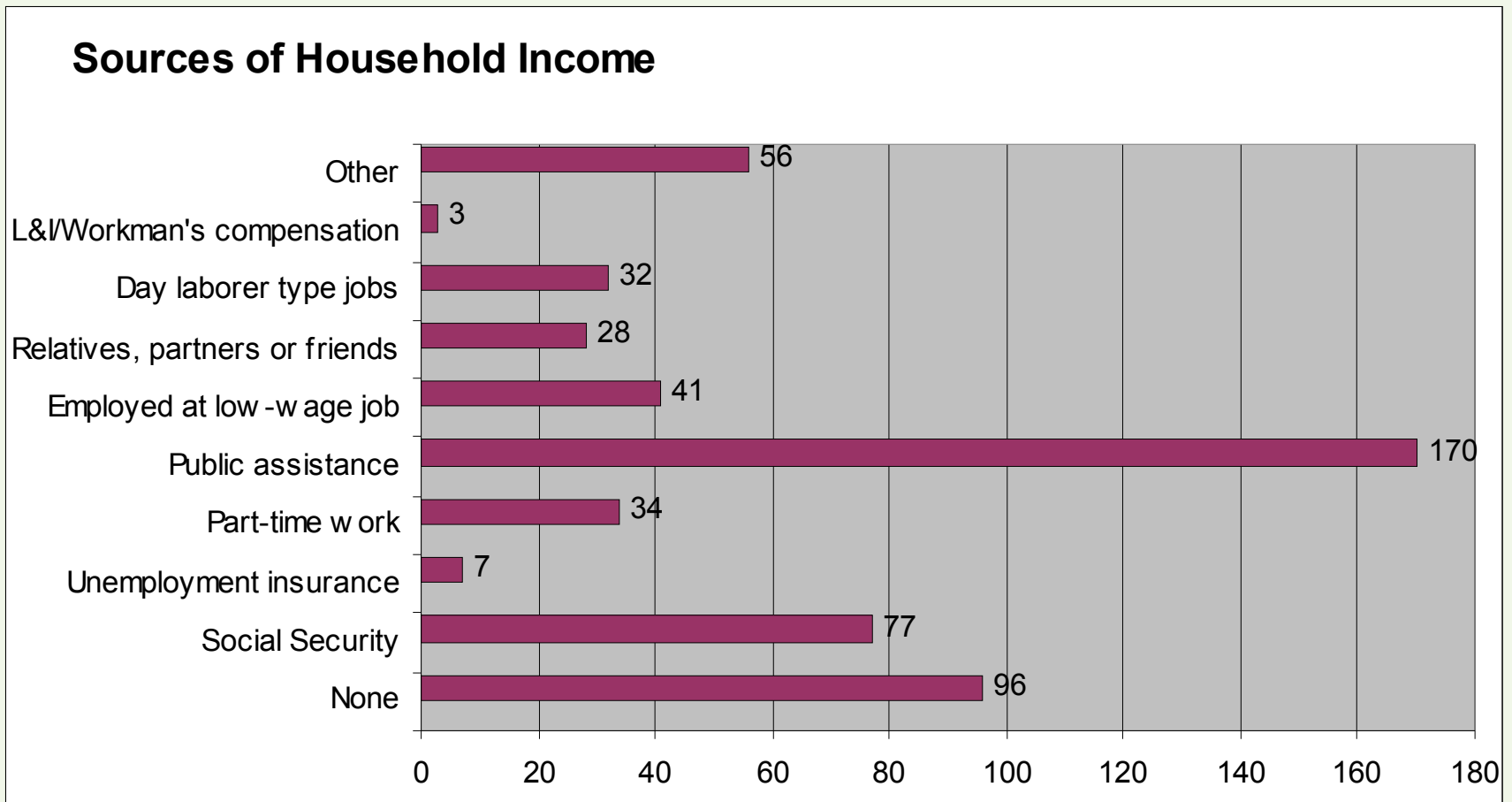
Unable to pay
rent/mortgage

Mental Illness

Job Loss



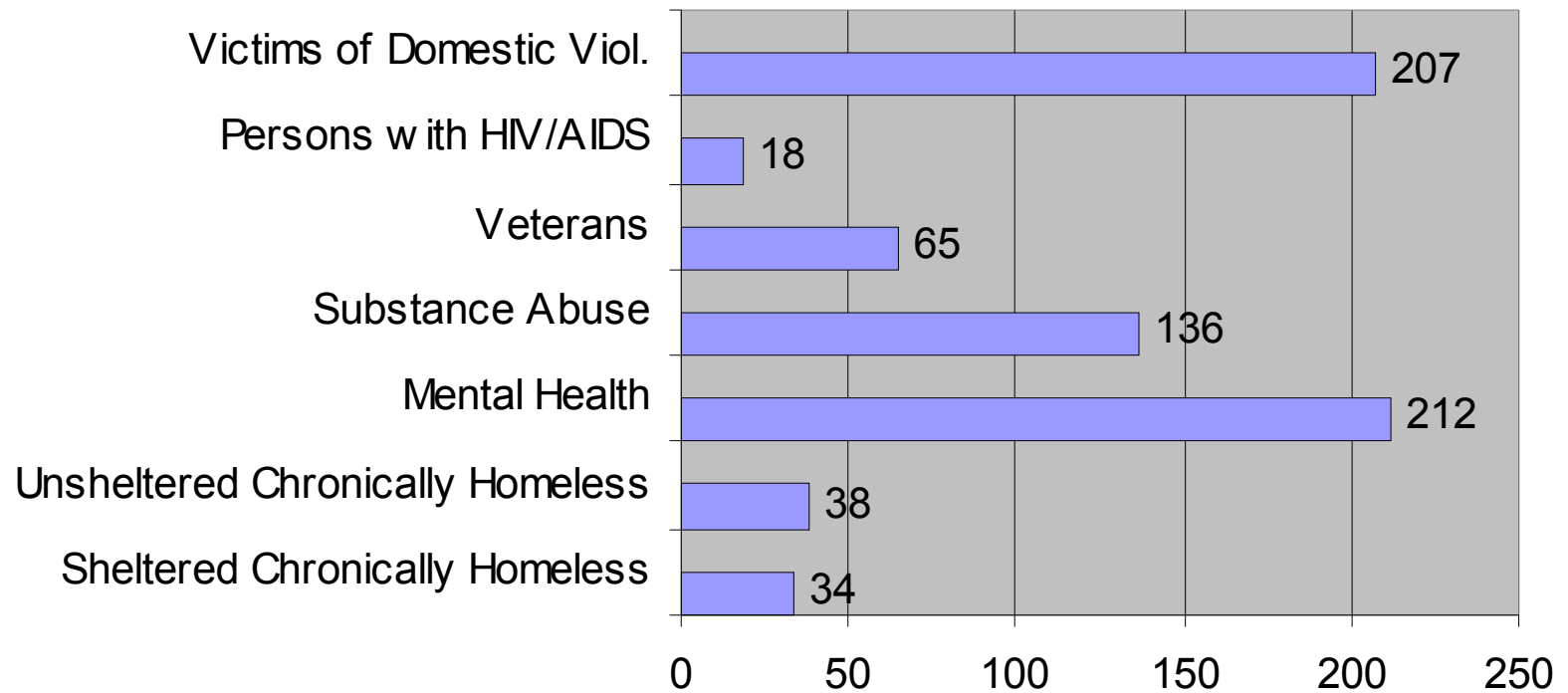
Sources of Household Income



The other category often included types of public assistance such as food stamps, VA pension, or the food bank.

Homeless sub-populations

Homeless Subpopulations



Nationwide trends in homelessness

Whatcom County's trends mirror national trends

- More people living on the margins
- Rising housing costs
- Lack of health care and unmet medical needs
- Domestic violence
- Alcohol and substance abuse



Photo by Taylor Phifer

2005 baseline to build upon

Future areas to address in the count

- Increase street outreach
- Enable service providers to fully participate in the count
- Offer volunteers to assist with filling out surveys
- Encourage forms be filled out as completely as possible
- Gather additional anecdotal information during the year
 - Severe Weather Shelter
 - Head count at homeless camps
- Conduct survey at other times of the year

What does this data mean for our county?

- What does this mean for service providers?
- What does this mean for homeless people in our community?
- What trends are service providers seeing in our county concerning homeless people?
- Is our county ready to meet the needs of the homeless if there are emerging trends or changes in the populations they are serving?
- How will future funding affect our county?

Comments or Questions?