

The NY-508 Continuum of Care (CoC) recognizes the Veterans Affairs' (VA) definition of a Veteran; an individual who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Veterans who do not meet this definition are served through the same coordinated entry process as all individuals experiencing homelessness in our CoC. The NY-508 CoC and the VA work closely together to ensure all Veterans are effectively served.

Over the last several years Western New York has made great strides to end Veteran's homelessness. In 2016, in partnership with Veteran Affairs Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program, our community obtained the designation from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness that Veteran's homelessness in Western New York had reached functional zero. Although ending Veteran's homelessness does not mean that no Veteran will experience homelessness, it means our CoC has ensured that Veteran homelessness is brief and non-recurring, and Veterans are housed within no more than 90 days from the date they were identified as homeless.

Within our CoC we have several homelessness alleviation providers serving this population including Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, street outreach, and HUD-VASH vouchers. As of the date of publication, less than 5 Veterans have been identified as currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Veterans are identified using a by-name list, as in general coordinated entry. Housing providers and outreach teams meet bi-weekly to case conference about clients on the by-name list and brainstorm about how each individual can be quickly housed and connected to as many mainstream resources as possible. The Veteran by-name list is compiled each week from Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data and updated weekly to reflect the current housing status and service needs of each client.

The data in this report, unless otherwise stated, comes from the Homeless Management Information System, which uses self-reported client-level information that is recorded on intake by homelessness alleviation providers. All data in this report is aligned with federal fiscal years. FFY2017 is October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017.

Main Findings

- 429 Veterans were experiencing homelessness in FFY 2017
- 92 percent of these identified as male
- 49.5 percent of homeless Veterans identified as Black; nationally, Black Veterans make up about 45 percent of the homeless Veteran population, despite making up only about 10.4 percent of the national Veteran population
- Veterans at any age can experience homelessness – in our CoC, homeless Veterans were aged between 20 and 95 years, with a significant percentage aged between 50 and 59 years

	2015 HMIS	2016 HUD PIT	2016 HMIS	2017 HUD PIT	2017 HMIS	2018 HUD PIT
NY-508	236	97	400	89	429	79
Erie County	222	70	316	54	305	54
Niagara County	14	5	21	6	34	5
Genesee County	-	21	108	31	90*	20
Orleans County	-	0	0	0	0	0
Wyoming County	-	0	1	0	0	0

Table 1: Total Veteran Homelessness

***There are currently two programs specifically serving Veterans in this county, making Genesee appear to have more Veteran homelessness than other populations experiencing homelessness**

The table above shows a comparison of the HUD annual Point in Time count and our CoC's annual HMIS client-level data. In FY 2017, 5 percent of all people experiencing homelessness in the NY-508 Continuum of Care were Veterans. In New York State, there were 1,244 Veterans experiencing homelessness. Nationally, HUD estimated there were 40,056 Veterans experiencing homelessness on a single night in January in 2017¹.

¹ 2017, The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress". <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Demographics of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Age

The majority of Veterans in FFY2017 in HMIS were between the ages of 50 – 59 with 36 percent falling into this age group. These Veterans are too young to have served in Vietnam, which is inconsistent with the national majority of Veterans who report having served in Vietnam². One Veteran was over 89 years of age (95 years).

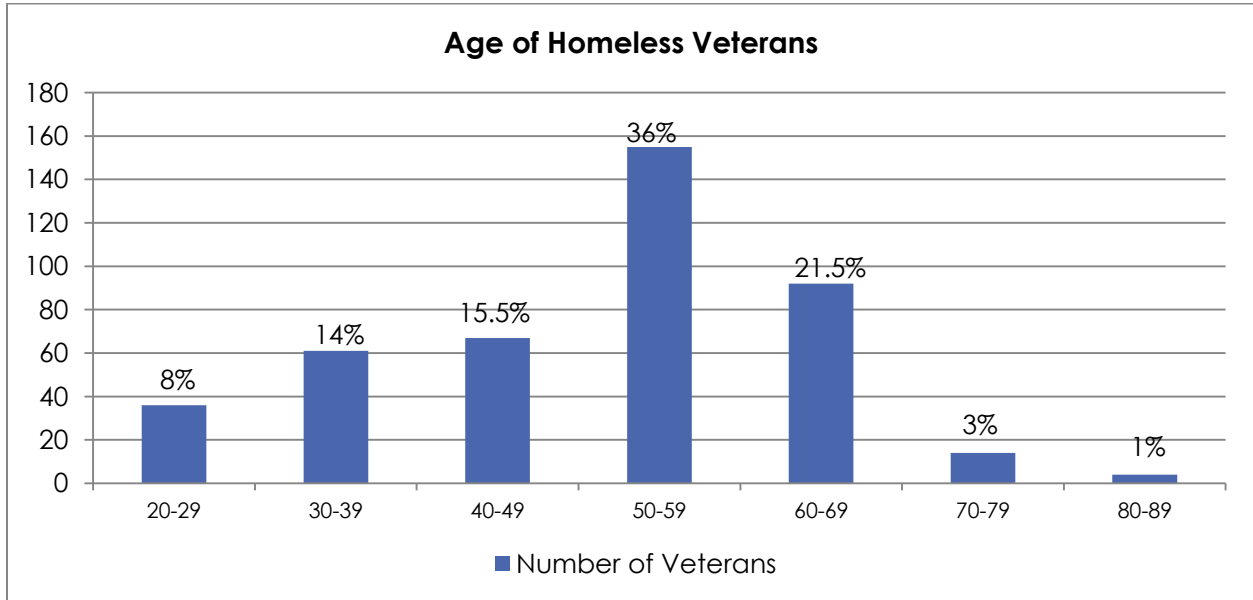


Figure 1: Age of Veterans experiencing homelessness in NY-CoC in FY2017

Gender

The majority (92 percent) of homeless Veterans identified as male. Eight percent identified as female. However, national statistics suggest that female Veteran homelessness may be on the rise.

Disability Status

Approximately 60.5 percent of Veterans experiencing homelessness in 2017 reported being diagnosed with a disability. This may include physical and developmental disabilities, as well as mental illness.

² 2015, National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Veteran Homelessness". <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/veteran-homelessness/>

Race and Ethnicity

In line with the demographics of the general homeless population, Black individuals are overrepresented in our homeless Veteran population. Nationally, Black homeless Veterans represent about 45 percent of the total homeless Veteran population; however, they represent only about 10.4 percent of the total national Veteran population³.

Reported Race and Ethnicity in HMIS	Non – Hispanic/Latinx	Hispanic/Latinx
Black	48.5 %	1 %
White	43 %	3 %
Asian	.5 %	-
Native American	.7 %	.2 %
Mixed Race	1.5 %	.2 %

Table 2: Race and ethnicity of Veterans experiencing homelessness in NY-CoC in FY2017

*Does not include 7 clients with missing or incomplete data

Residence Prior and Primary Reason Homeless

The majority of homeless Veteran's reported that prior to their current episode of homelessness, they were staying in an emergency shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation. Many also reported that they were residing in a substance use treatment facility prior to this episode of homelessness. This may be because of substance use treatment facilities in Western New York that specifically serve Veterans and their families. Also, it is worth noting the role that substance use and mental health plays in the lives of many Veterans. The VA has found that homeless Veterans are more likely than non-homeless Veterans to have received a mental health or substance use diagnosis at their time of discharge from active duty⁴. This highlights the importance of incorporating mental health and substance use treatment into Veteran specific services.

Reported Residence Prior to Homelessness	Percent of Veterans
Emergency Shelter	16%
Street	15%
Family	12%
Substance Use Treatment Facility	11.5%
Friend	10%
Rental	9.5%
Motel	5%
Jail	4%
Hospital	4%

Table 3: Most significant Residence Prior reported out of 429 Veterans experiencing homelessness in NY-CoC in FY2017

³ National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, "Background and Statistics".

http://nchv.org/index.php/news/media/background_and_statistics/

⁴ 2012, Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, "Homeless Incidence and Risk Factors for Becoming Homeless in Veterans".

<https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-11-03428-173.pdf>

The table below lists the most significant primary reasons for homelessness among Veterans in 2017. Substance use and mental health combined total 22 percent of Veteran's reasons for experiencing homelessness. Also significant is the percentage of data missing for this question in HMIS.

Reported Primary Reason Homeless	Percent of Veterans
Substance Use	15.5%
Missing data	14.5%
Household disputes (not domestic violence)	11%
Loss of income or public benefits	11%
Mental health	7%
Release from Institution	6.5%
Asked to leave by landlord	6%

Table 4: Percentage of Veterans and their reported primary reason homeless (out of 429 Veterans)

Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

- In order to successfully house the most vulnerable homeless Veterans, the SSVF programs, Emergency Shelters, and Grant Per Diem (transitional housing) programs must fully utilize the CoC Quarterly performance reports
- Continue coordination activities through the Veteran By - Name list meetings
- Continue to ensure adequate HUD-VASH funding
- Continue to ensure adequate Healthcare for Homeless Veterans funding