

## AUGUST 2011 SAMPLING OF KEY WEST HOMELESS POPULATION DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Between 8/15 and 8/19/11, Dr. Karen Larson (Professor of Anthropology and Interdisciplinary Studies, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN) and Ms. Erianna Reyelts (undergraduate Sociology/Anthropology/Social Work student) collected 72 face-to-face structured narrative interviews with homeless people in Key West. A parallel data draw will be made during the week of 1/30-2/3/12, with preliminary comparative analysis of the two samples provided in a evening meeting hosted by Dr. Larson and Ms. Reyelts in Key West on 2/4/12.

Equal time was devoted to taking interviews of approximately 15-20 minutes duration each at St. Mary's Soup Kitchen and Kots shelter. The sample is thus non-representative of the island as a whole, given its bias away from homeless people who do not patronize these facilities. 52 of those interviewed (71%) utilize both facilities.

### GENDER

61 interviewees were male  
12 interviewees were female

### AGE

20s 3  
30s 5  
40s 23  
50s 33  
60s 9

(One interviewee was accompanied by his 18-year-old son)

### DATE OF HOMELESSNESS COMPARED TO DATE OF ENTRY TO KEY WEST

Homeless more than 5 years before coming to Key West	4
Homeless between 1 and 5 years before coming to Key West	7
Homeless less than 1 year before coming to Key West	9
Homelessness "simultaneous"* with entry into Key West	23
Homeless 1 year or less after entry into Key West	6
Homeless between 1 and 5 years after coming to Key West	2
Homeless more than 5 years after coming to Key West	22

20 (27%) of interviewees were homeless for a period of time before coming to Key West. 30 (41%) of interviewees became homeless after a period of time residing in Key West, with almost ¾ of that group having been longer term (over 5 years) residents in the city prior to becoming homeless. 23 (32%) of the interviewees became homeless “simultaneous”\* with their arrival in Key West. Of those 23, only two experienced events while in Key West that precipitated their homeless status (i.e. injured on job immediately after arrival, lost job at home out of state after being arrested and incarcerated in Key West). The other 21 cases were all variants on a theme of coming to Key West with insufficient resources to reasonably anticipate acquiring housing, or traveling to Key West right after experiencing a catastrophic life event elsewhere (i.e. broke up with a girlfriend in New York or kicked out by parents in Wisconsin and got on a bus, left or lost some combination of jobs/housing/family members in Sarasota, Baton Rouge, Michigan, or Philadelphia and came here, etc.)

#### WHERE BECAME HOMELESS

Keys (Key West 40)	44 (60%)
Other Florida	11
Out of state/country	18

Note: “Simultaneous” group reported at point of origin in above figures.

#### HOW LONG EXPECT TO BE IN KEY WEST

Will be here permanently	30 (41%)
Will stay for a specific amount of time (months to years)	18
Want to leave as soon as possible	13
Don’t know	11
No response	1

#### HOW BECAME HOMELESS

Job loss	36 (49%)
Money	21
Problems with family/friends	17
Traveling	8
Alcohol	8
Health	7
Other (i.e. hurricane, etc.)	7

Note: Multiple response question, total higher than 73 because all responses recorded and reported. “Alcohol” includes alcohol and other drugs. Of the 36 who reported homelessness due to job loss, 6 also reported alcohol as a reason for homelessness, 10 had information about alcohol problems elsewhere in their interviews, which suggests a possible connection, and 20 gave no indication of alcohol problems anywhere in their interviews.

## WHERE SLEEP

Kots	65 (89%)
Camp out	14
With friends	4

Note: Multiple response question, responses seriously skewed by data collection at Kots

## WHERE GET FOOD

St. Mary's	59 (81%)
Store/Food stamps	43
Other charities	36
Friends	2
Dumpster	2

Note: Multiple response question, responses seriously skewed by data collection at St. Mary's, "Other charities" responses are 89% Star of the Sea and MCC

## WHERE GET MAIL

General delivery	23 (32%)
None	20
Friends	14
PO Box/Rental box	10
Homeless service provider location	6

## WHERE SHOWER

Kots	61 (84%)
Beach	13
Friends	6
City pool	4
Other (i.e. college, hotel, Project Lighthouse)	6

Note: Multiple response question, responses seriously skewed by data collection at Kots

## HOW GET AROUND

Bike	48 (66%)
Walk	21

Bus	10
Own motorized vehicle	3

Note: Multiple response question

#### WORK

None	36 (50%)
Minimal	19
Looking	15
3/4 to full time	2
No response	1

Note: Minimal work is “odds and ends,” “part time,” “side jobs,” etc. If “none” and “looking” categories are combined to reflect the fact that no work is being performed at present, they comprise together 51 respondents, or 70% of the sample.

#### SSI/SSDI

No	67 (92%)
SSDI	2
Other (SSI or VA application pending, etc)	3

Note: 30 respondents made note of being food stamp recipients

#### OTHER INCOME

None	62 (86%)
Work	6
Friends/family	2
Unemployment/retirement	2
No response	1

#### CONTACT WITH FAMILY

None	38 (52%)
Siblings	13
Parents	6
Spouse	2
Cousin	4
Unspecified relative	7
Other (i.e. grandparent)	3

## DEPENDENTS

None	66 (92%)
Children under 18	6
No response	1

## ID

Yes	50 (70%)
No/Working on it (12/9)	21
No response	2

## NUMBER OF EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS IN LAST YEAR

None	35 (49%)
1	13
2	8
3	5
4	4
More than 4	7
No response	1

## NUMBER OF HOSPITALIZATIONS IN LAST YEAR

None	51 (71%)
1	7
2	7
3	3
4	1
More than 4	3
No response	1

## NUMBER OF TIMES RECEIVED OTHER MEDICAL CARE IN LAST YEAR

None	59 (82%)
1	8
2	1
3	3
4	0
More than 4	1
No response	1

#### NUMBER OF TIMES SEEN A DENTIST IN LAST YEAR/WHEN LAST SAW DENTIST

None	62 (86%)
1	7
2	3
No response	1

Note: From the 62 respondents who reported not having seen a dentist in the past year, 37 respondents knew when they had last seen a dentist. The reported time from their last visit varied from 2 to 30 years, with a mean time of over 11 years. 15 had no idea how long it had been since they saw a dentist. 10 reported not having a need to see a dentist because they had false teeth.

#### NUMBER OF TIMES BEEN TO DETOX IN LAST YEAR

None	61 (84%)
1	8
2	0
3	0
4	2
More than 4	2

#### NUMBER OF TIMES ARRESTED IN LAST YEAR

None	44 (61%)
1	21
2	3
3	2
4	0
More than 4	2
No response	1

#### NUMBER OF TIME JAILED IN PAST YEAR

None	47 (65%)
1	18
2	3
3	2
4	0
More than 4	2
No response	1

## SERVICES USED IN KEY WEST

Kots	56 (77%)
St. Mary's	52
Star of the Sea	20
Salvation Army	11
Metropolitan Community Church	10
Other	24

Note: Multiple response question, responses seriously skewed by data collection at Kots and St. Mary's, "Other" category includes Care Center, Lions glasses, Samuel's House, Job Force, the library, etc.

## QUALITY OF SERVICES IN KEY WEST

Responses were coded onto a five-point scale, 5=excellent, 4=good, 3=neutral, 2=poor, 1=bad. The mean response was 3.5, between neutral and good.

Note: 9 specific comments about St. Mary's Soup Kitchen were all positive (i.e. "awesome," "nice"). 9 specific comments about Kots were all negative (i.e. smelly, unsanitary").

## SERVICES DESIRED IN KEY WEST

Day center	17
Improve Kots	15
Medical/dental/psychological	12
Job services	10
Storage facilities (lockers)	9
Housing	4
Mail	2
ID help	2
Other (i.e. transportation, classes)	10

Note: Multiple response question

## HOW GET ALONG WITH KEY WEST HOMED POPULATION

Responses were coded onto a three-point scale, 3=positive, 2=neutral, 1=negative. The mean response was 2.4, between neutral and positive.

## HOW GET ALONG WITH KEY WEST POLICE

Responses were coded onto a three-point scale, 3=positive, 2=neutral, 1=negative. The mean response was 1.9, between neutral and negative.

## OTHER

Almost half of the respondents had nothing to add. Some elaborated on their personal histories. Notable comments were:

- 1) That homeless people should be provided with more information about available services.
- 2) That people come to Key West thinking they can sleep on the beach and are confronted instead with no trespassing signs everywhere.
- 3) That there were more homeless because of the recession/an unusually high amount of summer traffic.
- 4) A hope that homeless people wouldn't start being killed.
- 5) A wish for stability and the ability to "live like a human being again."
- 6) That poverty has become a crime in America.
- 7) Selective enforcement of laws by police with prejudice against the homeless.
- 8) Jobs going to immigrants rather than local homeless.