

House the Homeless, Inc. & Keep Austin Housed/AmeriCorps

The Homeless Survey: Shattering the Myth That People Experiencing Homelessness Do Not Want To Work

House the Homeless, Inc. & Keep Austin Housed/AmeriCorps Survey Report 1/7/08

On December 25, 2007 at the Austin First Baptist Church, *House the Homeless (HTH)* and *Keep Austin Housed/AmeriCorps* joined forces at the HTH 8th Annual Thermal Underwear Distribution Party and conducted a survey. The 600 + people who were provided life saving thermal underwear and other winter clothing were invited to participate. 526 people experiencing homelessness voluntarily responded to the survey. (Note: A total of 19 additional surveys were discarded as being unintelligible. Margin of error 3.98.)

Richard R. Troxell, President of House the Homeless, Inc. and National Chairman of the Universal Living Wage Campaign has declared the survey results to be "...stunning results with national implications!" He went on to say that "Although homeless, over 37% of these people are working at some point during the week. This means that the Puritan work ethic is in evidence. Furthermore, it is now clear that what is lacking for many of them to end their homelessness is a living wage job."

Survey Results

Do you work?

yes: 199

no: 327

non-responses: 0

37.8% are working.

Hours of work ranged from 2-3 hours per day to 40+ per week

Do you want to work?

yes; 472

no: 48

6 non-responses

89.7% want to work. Of those responding, 90.8% want to work.

What is keeping you from working?

Ranked in order of highest importance

<u>response</u>	<u># of responses</u>
1. health issues	62
2. can't find work	60
3. disabled	56
4. no identification	50
5. economics/ low wages	21
6. "me"	18
7. transportation	17
8. criminal history/legal	16
9. need tools/clothes	10
10. lack experience/education	07
11. retired/age	06
12. weather	05
13. day care	04
13. new to area	04
13. personal problems	04
14. time	02
14. undocumented	02
15. ethical concerns	01

(Note. A number of people listed multiple barriers.)

Would you work a 40 hour week job if you were sure it would pay you enough for basic food, clothing, and shelter?

yes: 468

no: 48

non-responses: 10

89% would work a 40 hour week for living wages. Of those responding, 90.7% would work 40 hours for a living wage.

Do you get disability benefits?

yes: 100

no: 426

non-responses: 0

19% receive disability benefits.

Do you have photo ID?

yes: 360

no: 164

non-responses: 2

31.2% need photo identification. Of those responding, 31.3% need photo ID.

What is keeping you from getting ID?

Ranked in order of highest importance.

<u>responses</u>	<u># of responses</u>
1. need ID documents to get photo ID	39
2. costs	38
3. application pending	08
3. no reason "me"	08
3. criminal record	08
4. don't want to miss work	02
5. hopelessness	01
5. time	01
5. health issue (brain injured)	01

Are you a Veteran?

yes: 121

no: 401

non-responses: 4

23% are Veterans. Of those responding, 23.2% are Veterans.

Note. 399 signed the survey with either their first name, last name, or both. This was optional. 75.9%

Note. Statistical significance of the survey: The Austin Area Homeless Task Force counted 4,000 people experiencing homelessness in the Austin Area in 2007. With 526 homeless people surveyed, 13.1% of the population was sampled. If the population of people experiencing homelessness is 6,000 then 8.76% of the population was sampled.

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