

BRIEFING PAPER

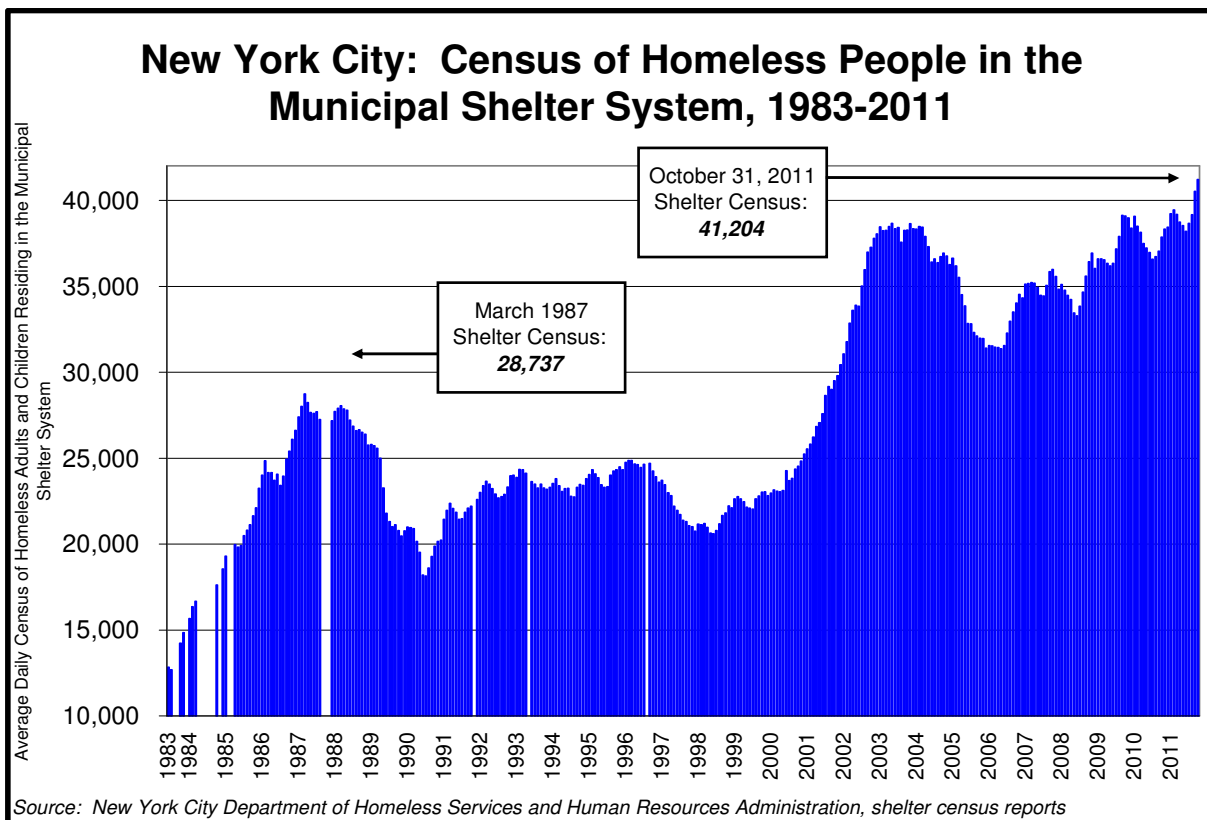
## Forty-one Thousand: As Mayor Bloomberg's Failed Policies Exacerbate Crisis, NYC Homeless Shelter Population Tops 41,000 People Per Night for First Time Ever

November 9, 2011

By Patrick Markee, Senior Policy Analyst, Coalition for the Homeless

New City data shows that the New York City municipal shelter population now exceeds 41,000 homeless people per night for the first time since modern homelessness began three decades ago. Following are the highlights of the alarming new homelessness data:

- There are now **more than 41,000 homeless adults and children** sleeping in the New York City shelter system each night – the **first time ever that the shelter population has exceeded 40,000 people**.
- **The number of homeless children in New York City has reached an all-time record high**, with **nearly 17,000 children** sleeping in municipal shelters each night. Since May alone the **number of homeless children in shelters has increased by 10 percent**.
- The number of homeless children and families in New York City has **continued to rise dramatically since the spring, when the Bloomberg administration eliminated all housing assistance programs** designed to help homeless families move from shelters to permanent housing. Since May the **total number of homeless families in shelters has increased by more than 5 percent**.



- Homeless families are also forced to stay in shelter for longer periods. **Average shelter stays have risen from eight to eleven months over the past year**, and have **risen 8 percent** since May alone.
- During the last fiscal year, the City spent **more than \$1 billion on homeless services for the first time ever** – nearly twice what the City spent on homeless services when Mayor Bloomberg took office.
- The **total homeless shelter population is 33 percent higher** than when Mayor Bloomberg took office, and the **number of homeless families is 45 percent higher** than when the Mayor took office.

Back in May, shortly after City officials ended the troubled Advantage program and refused to replace it with proven Federal housing programs, **Mayor Bloomberg and administration officials defended their latest controversial policy shift**. They said that the shelter population would not increase significantly, and predicted that fewer homeless families would seek shelter. In fact, the Mayor proposed a homeless services budget more than one fifth lower than the last fiscal year's actual expenditures.

**But only a few short months later, the verdict on Mayor Bloomberg's latest disastrous homeless policy shift is in.** And the result is a new all-time record homeless population in New York City – more than 41,000 people for the first time ever – with even further increases expected in the coming months. The number of **homeless families entering municipal shelters is back to historically high levels**, and homeless children and families are staying longer and longer in the expensive shelter system.

Mayor Bloomberg's radical departure from the proven policy of giving the homeless access to permanent, affordable housing has failed. As we did in our *State of the Homeless 2011* report, Coalition for the Homeless calls on the City to:

- **Return to the successful policies of previous New York City mayors of targeting “one in three” Federal housing resources to homeless New Yorkers; and**
- **Return to the successful policy of targeting a significant share of City-assisted housing units to homeless families and individuals.**

### **Forty-one Thousand: New Data Shows Historic All-Time Record NYC Homeless Shelter Population**

In the wake of Mayor Bloomberg's decision to eliminate all housing assistance for homeless families, the number of homeless people sleeping each night in New York City municipal shelters has reached more than 41,000 people for the first time ever.

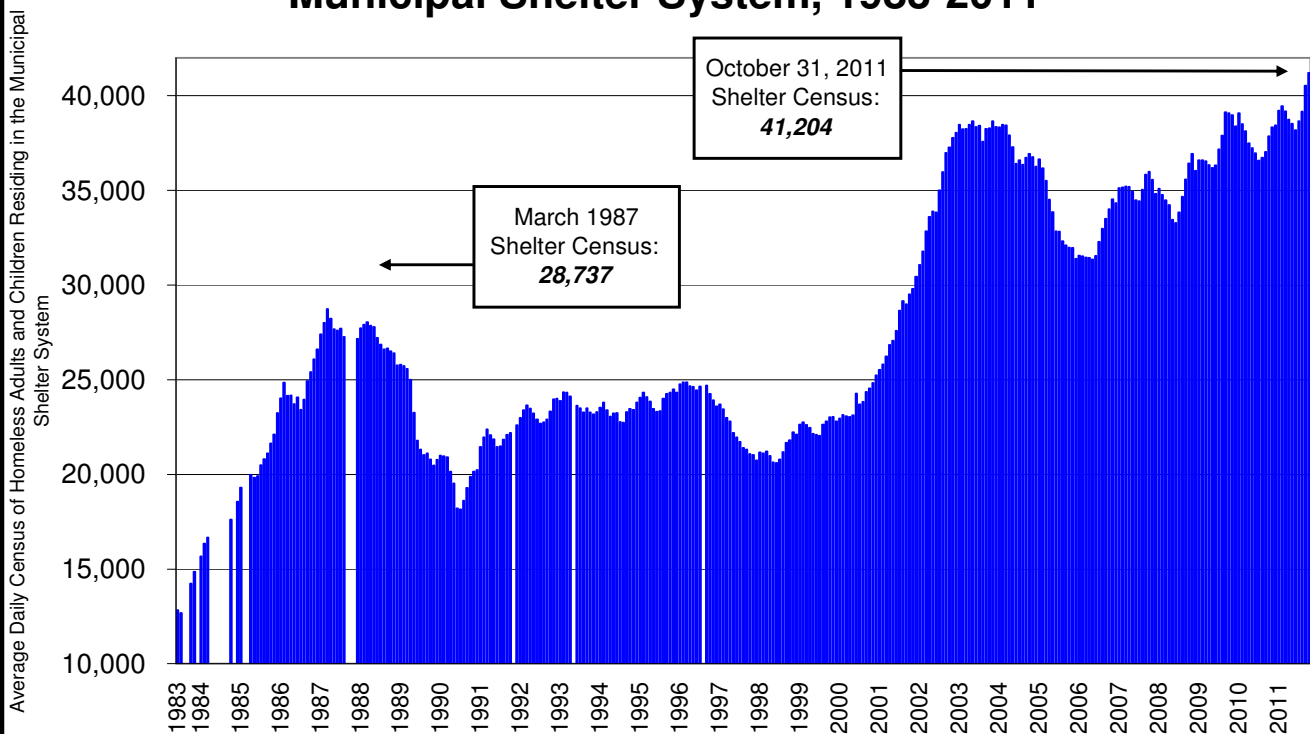
Still struggling with high unemployment and the widening gap between incomes and apartment rents, more and more New Yorkers have been driven into homelessness. **However, now – for the first time since modern homelessness began three decades ago – New York City's mayor has no housing assistance program in place to help homeless children and families escape the shelter system and secure permanent housing.**

Following are highlights of recently released City data:<sup>1</sup>

- At the end of October there were **41,204 homeless adults and children sleeping in New York City municipal shelters, an all-time record**. This is the first time ever that the number of homeless people sleeping each night in the New York City shelter system has exceeded 40,000 people.
- Since last year (October 2010 to October 2011), the **total number of homeless people in the New York City municipal shelter system each night has increased by 9 percent**.
- Since May of this year – after the City eliminated all housing assistance for homeless families – the **total number of homeless people in the New York City municipal shelter system each night has increased by 7 percent**.

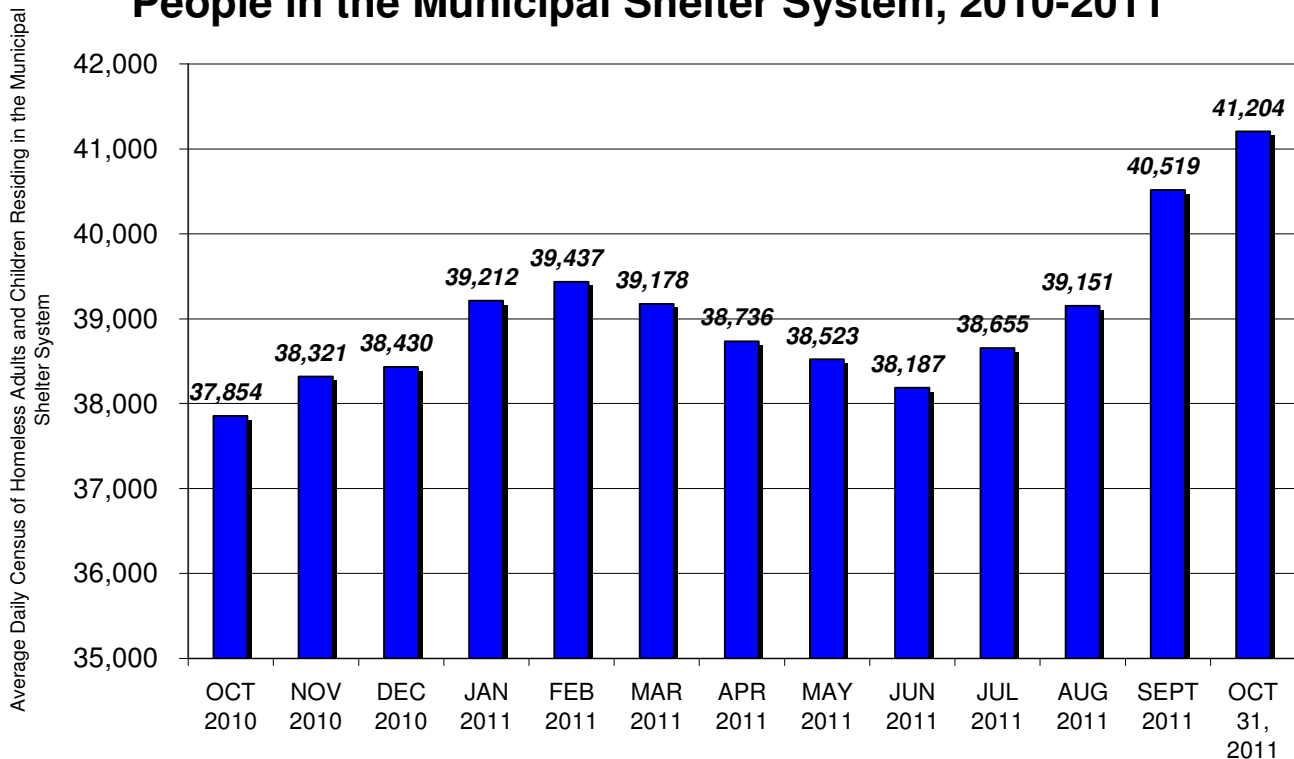
- ***The number of homeless children in New York City shelters – 16,934 children at the end of October – has reached an all-time record high.*** Since May the ***number of homeless children in shelters has increased by 10 percent.***
- Since last year (October 2010 to October 2011), the ***number of homeless children in New York City shelters each night has increased by 13 percent.***
- Since May of this year – after the City eliminated all housing assistance for homeless families – the ***number of homeless children in New York City shelters each night has increased by 5 percent.***
- Homeless families are staying in the municipal shelter system for longer periods. Average shelter stays have ***risen from eight to eleven months – a remarkable 28 percent – over the past year,*** and have ***risen 8 percent between May and September alone.***
- The ***number of homeless single adults has also increased significantly during the past year – 4 percent*** from October 2010 to October 2011. There are now more homeless single adults bedding down each night in municipal shelters than at any time since 1989.<sup>2</sup>
- Although Bloomberg administration officials claimed in May that fewer families would enter the shelter system in the absence of housing subsidies, the number of homeless families entering shelters is at historically high levels. Through September of this year, an ***average of 1,252 families entered the municipal shelter system each month, making 2011 the third worst year since the City began keeping records three decades ago.***
- As detailed in our *State of the Homeless 2011* report, Mayor Bloomberg's experiments with flawed time-limited subsidy programs like the Advantage program have ***forced thousands of formerly-homeless children and families back into the shelter system and homelessness.***
- In the seven years (FY 1999-FY 2005) before the Bloomberg administration's time-limited subsidies were implemented – that is, during the period when the City used Federal housing programs to help families move from shelters to permanent housing – an ***average of 25 percent of all families entering the municipal shelter system had been homeless in the past.***
- In contrast, in the recently-ended FY 2011, an ***average of 49 percent of all families entering the shelter system – nearly half of all families entering shelter – had been homeless in the past.***
- During the last fiscal year, the City spent ***more than \$1 billion on homeless services for the first time ever*** – nearly twice what the City spent on homeless services when Mayor Bloomberg took office.

## New York City: Census of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



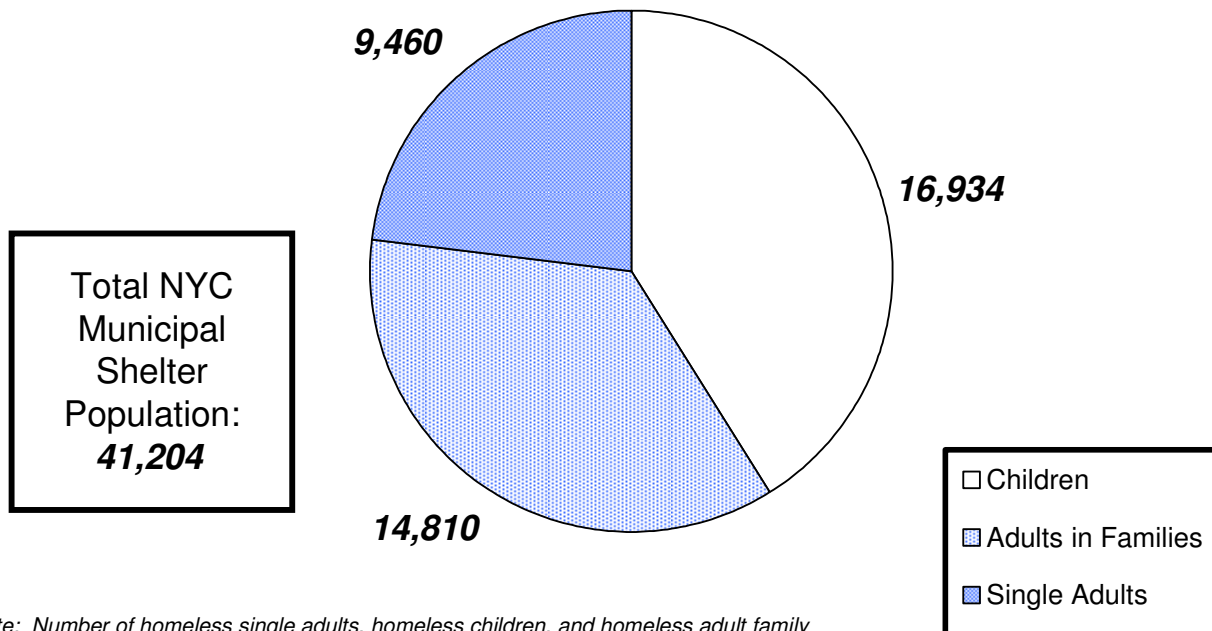
Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports

## New York City: Average Number of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, 2010-2011



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

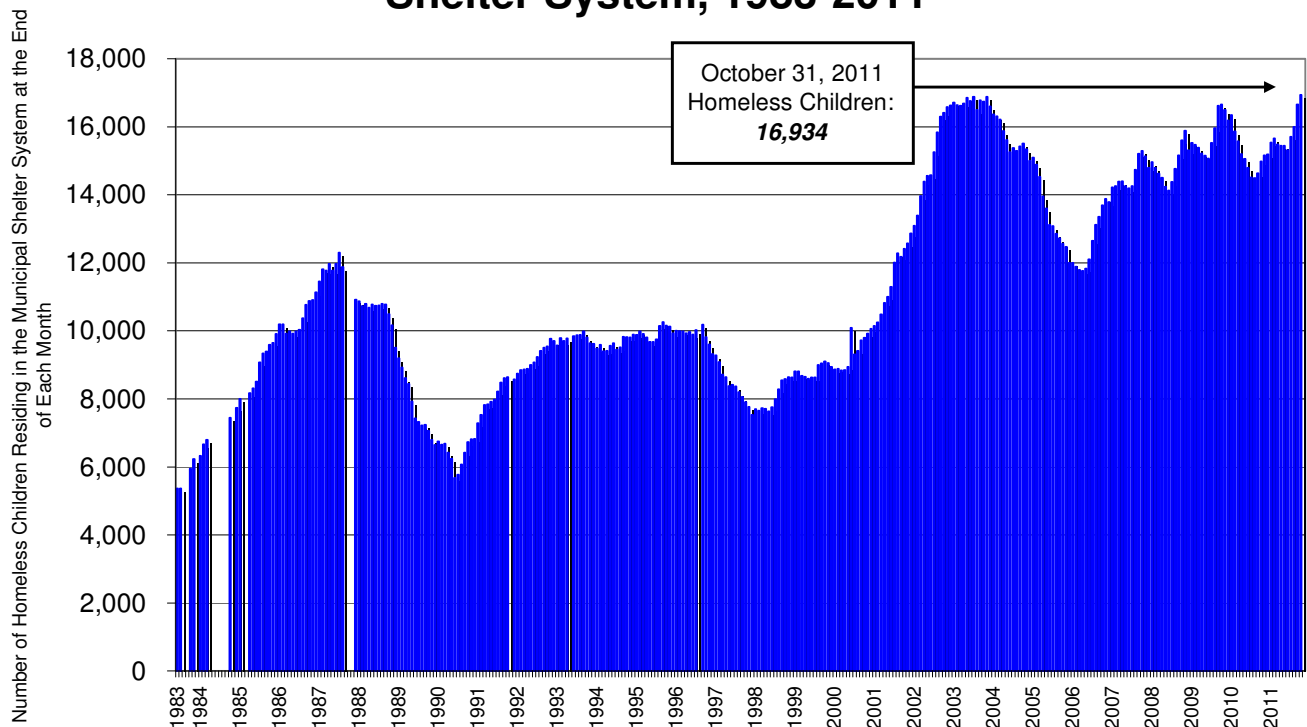
## New York City: Census of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, October 31, 2011



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

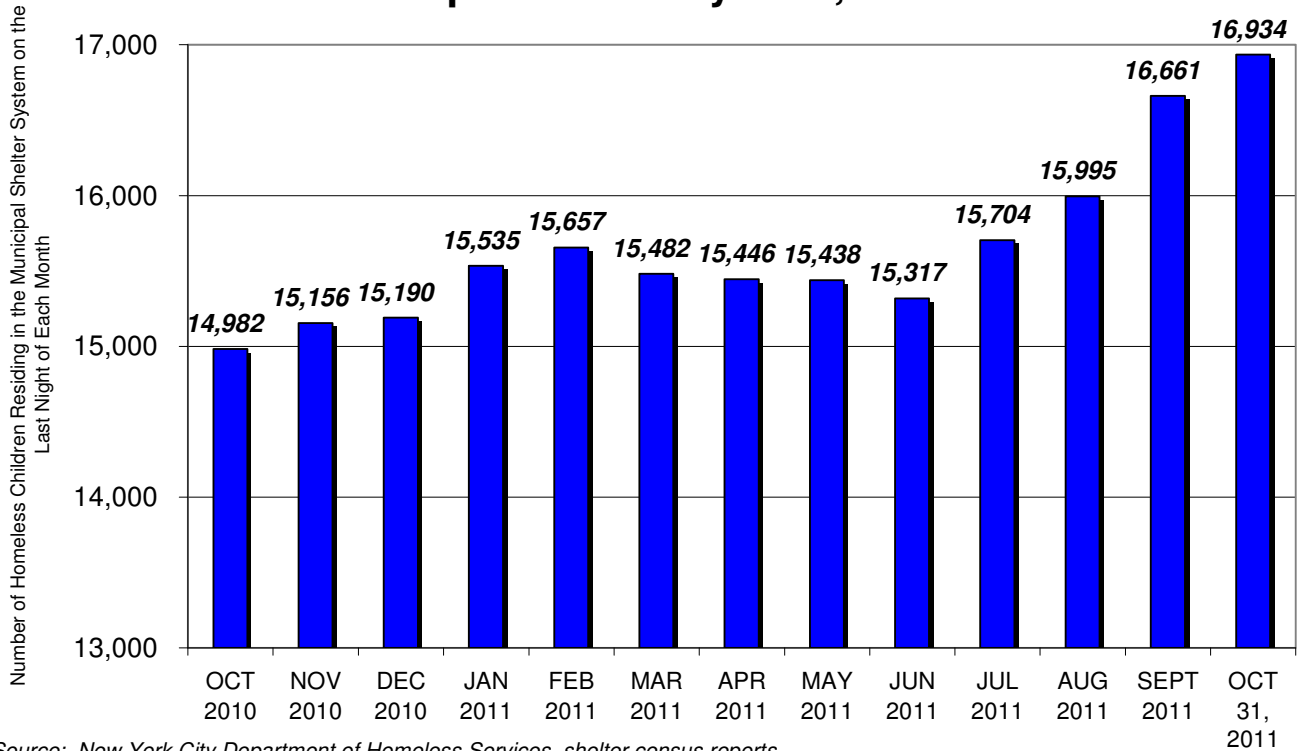
Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

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

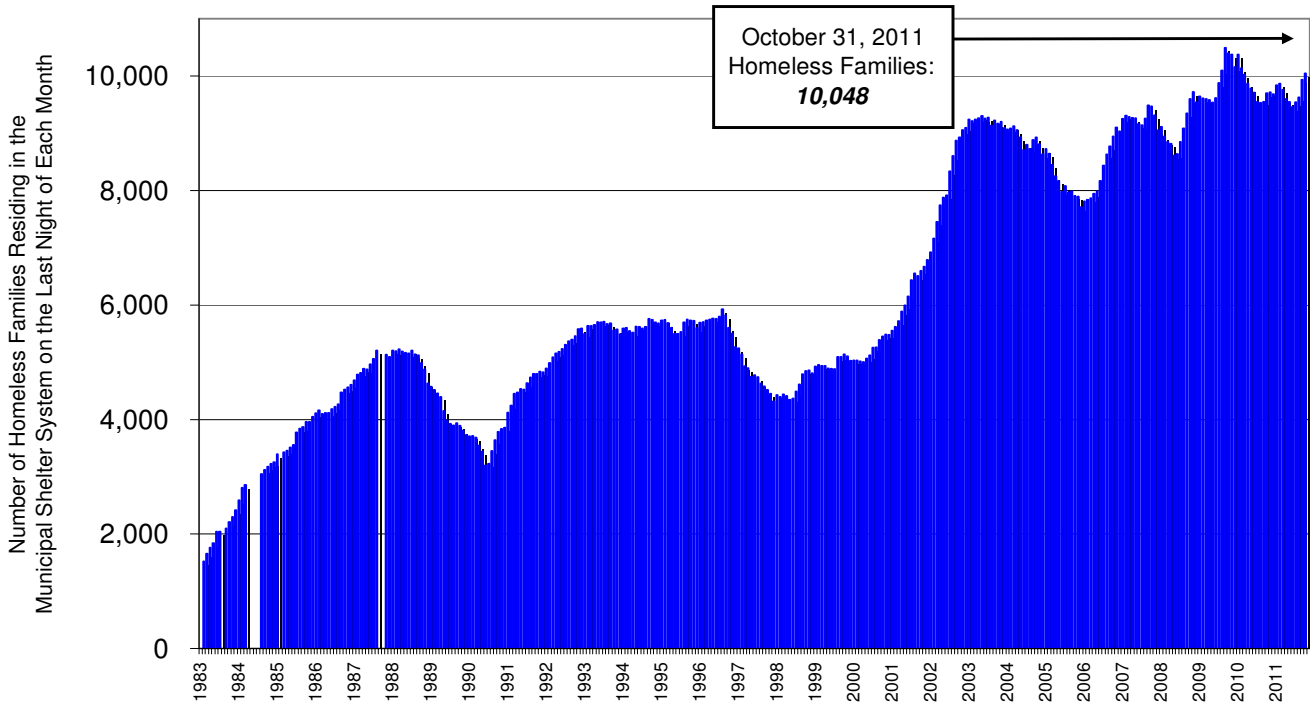


Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

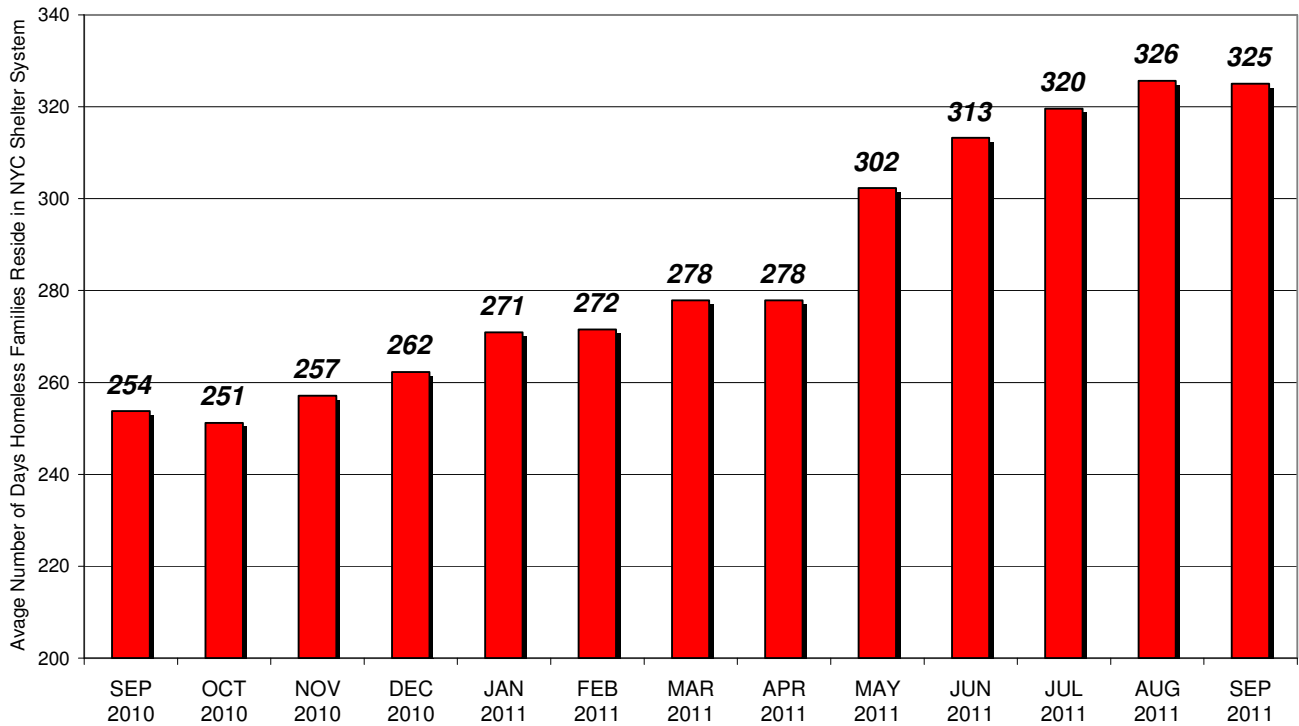
## New York City: Number of Homeless Children in the Municipal Shelter System, 2010-2011



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

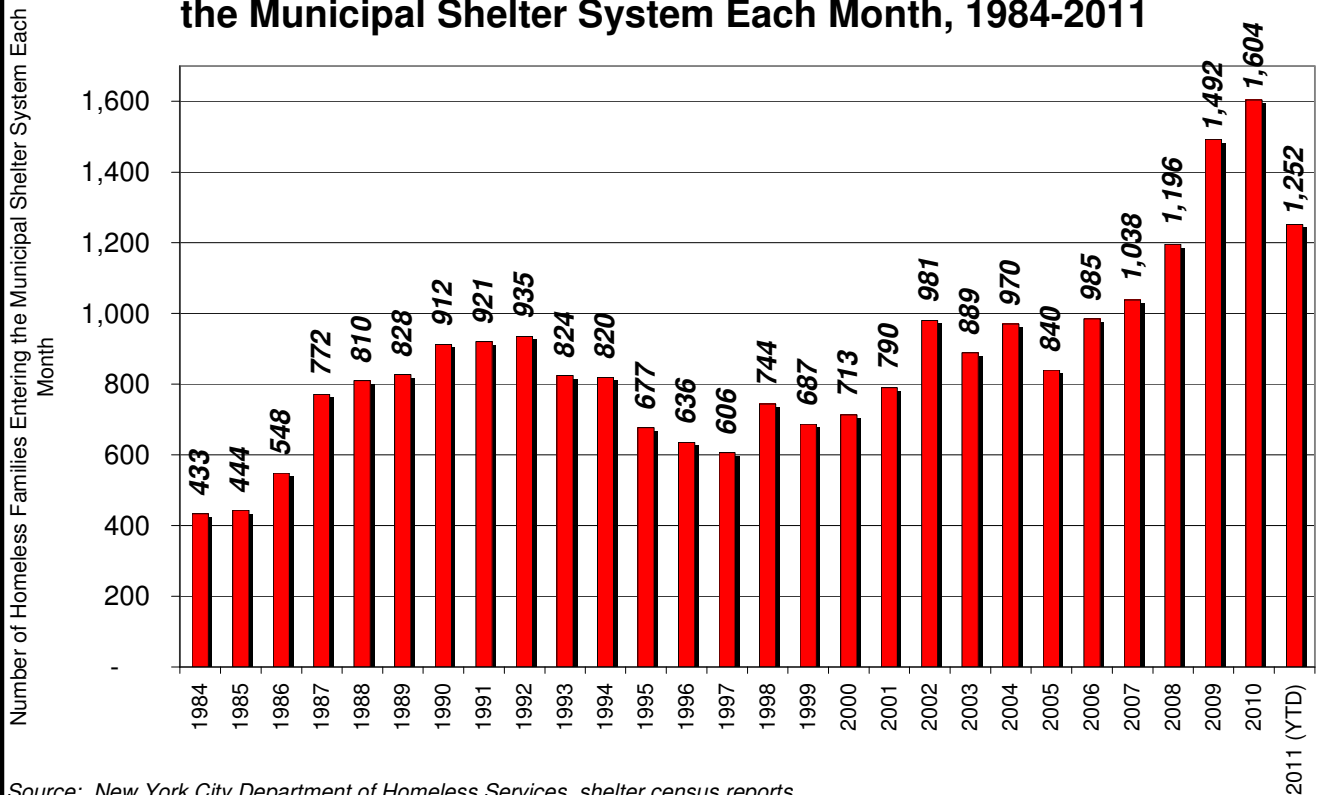


## NYC Homeless Families Staying in Shelter Longer (Average Number of Days in Shelter System)



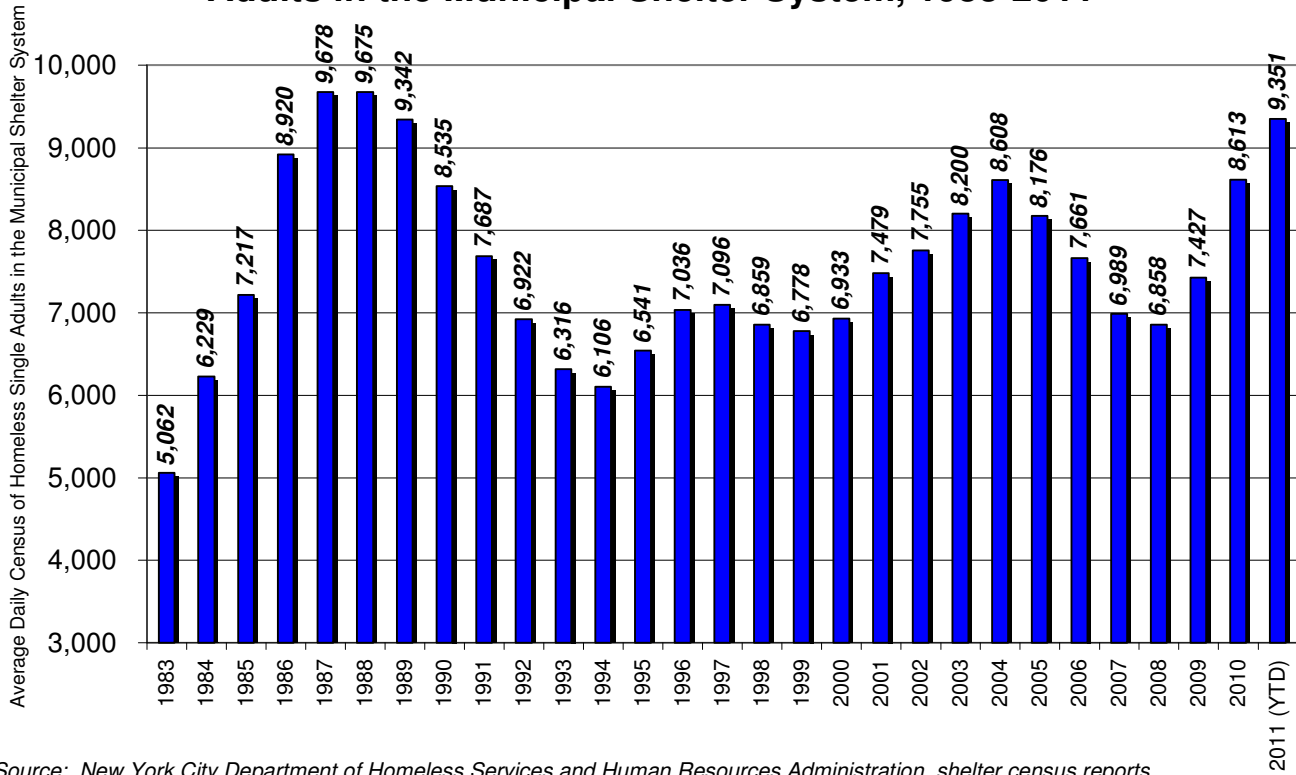
Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services

## NYC: Average Number of Homeless Families Entering the Municipal Shelter System Each Month, 1984-2011

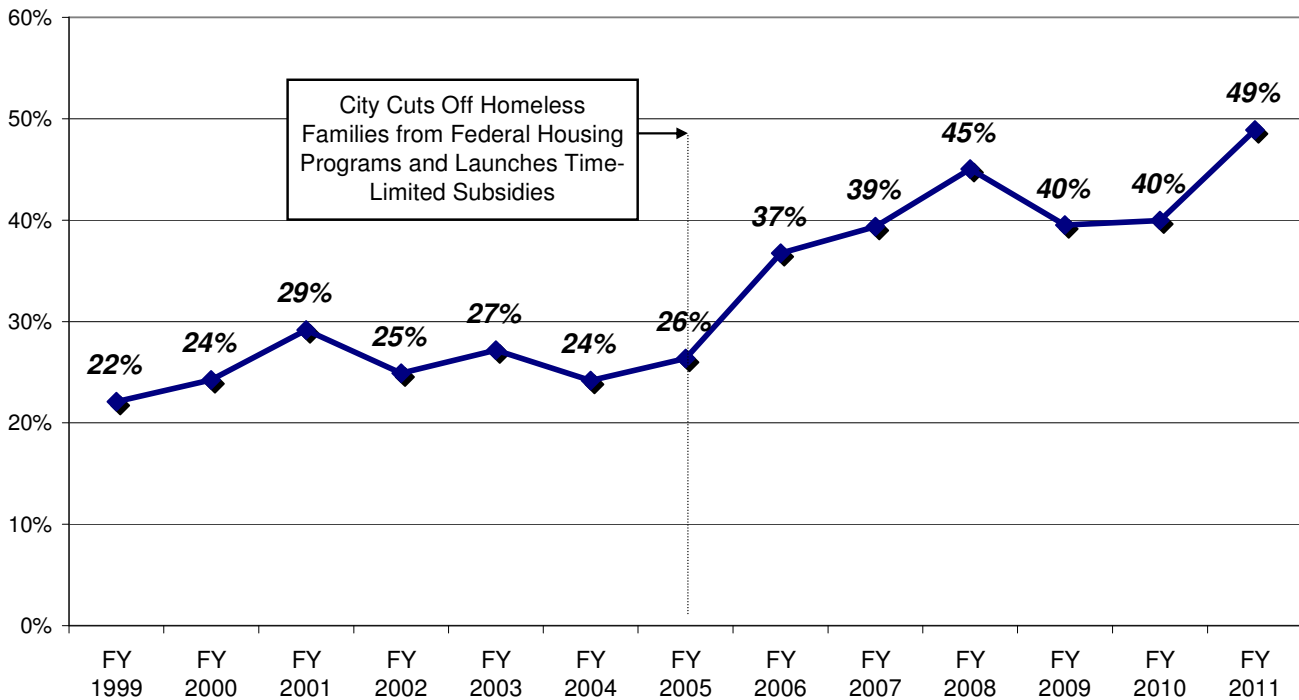


Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

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



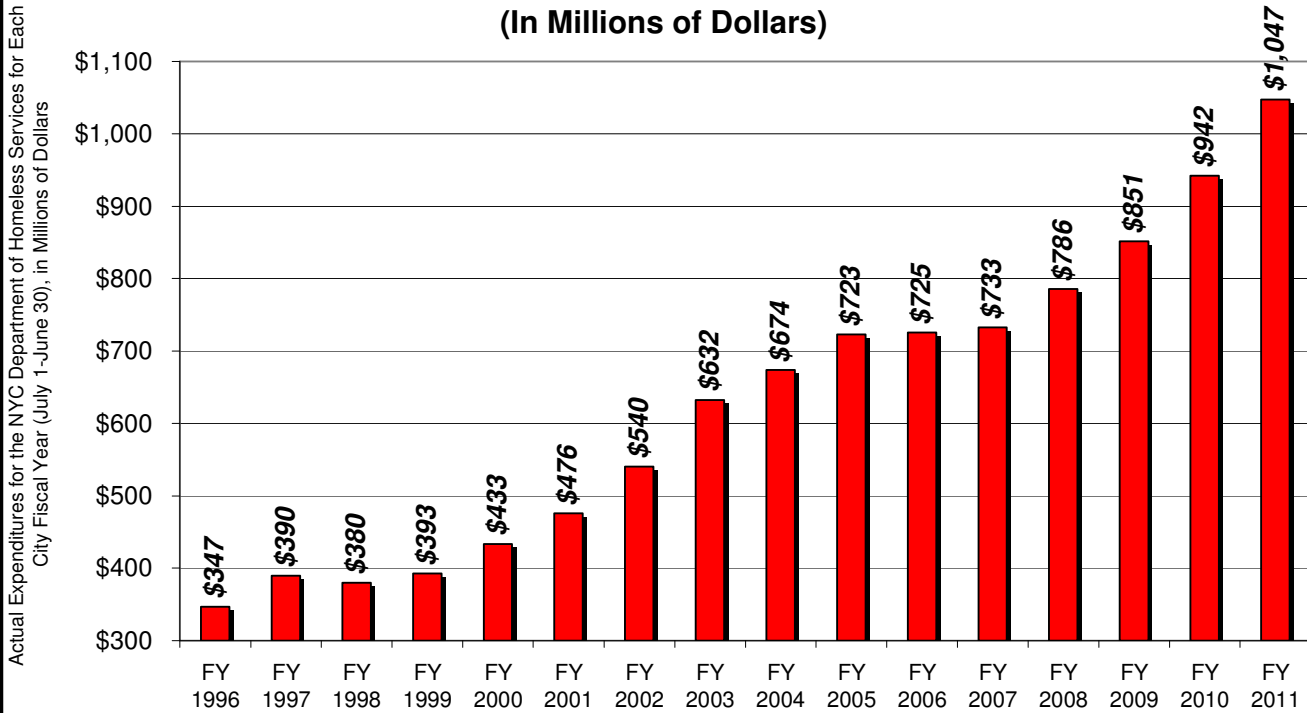
## Larger Share of Homeless Families Entering Shelter System Are Formerly Homeless, FY 1999-FY 2011



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services



## New York City: Expenditures on Homeless Shelter and Services, FY 1996-FY 2011 (In Millions of Dollars)



Source: New York City Office of Management and Budget

### **Time for Change: The Latest Bloomberg Homeless Policy Shift Has Already Failed**

With the elimination of the controversial Advantage program and his refusal to use more effective Federal and City housing resources to address the problem of homelessness, Mayor Bloomberg is the first New York City mayor in three decades to have no plan whatsoever to help homeless children and families escape homelessness.

Now, with more than 40,000 homeless children and adults crowded into municipal shelters each night and the shelter population on the rise, the time to reverse Mayor Bloomberg's failed policies is long overdue.

As we wrote in our State of the Homeless 2011 report, Mayor Bloomberg and his administration should look to the past and learn the lessons of previous mayors who, at various times, had to confront rising homelessness. Indeed, Mayors Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani may have little in common, but they did agree on one thing: ***The smart, cost-effective, and proven way to help homeless children and families move from costly shelters to long-term, stable homes is by using Federal housing programs and City affordable housing resources.***

Coalition for the Homeless calls on Mayor Bloomberg and other City officials to build on the success of the past and enact the following policies:

**1. Immediately begin to use "one in three" available public housing apartments and Federal housing vouchers to help homeless families and individuals move from shelters to permanent housing.**

- This can be swiftly accomplished by using the existing priority system for both the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing and voucher waiting lists, which makes households referred by the NYC Department of Homeless Services the highest priority applicants.

- In addition, NYCHA should act to restore the separate “emergency priority” for all homeless households that was reduced in 2005.

**2. In coming years, the City should set aside a significant percentage of City-assisted apartments – apartments created or preserved by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) – for homeless families and individuals.**

- This policy would build on the success of Mayor Koch’s ten-year “Housing New York” program which allocated 15,000 affordable apartments – 10 percent of all housing units created or preserved under the program – for homeless New Yorkers.
- Currently Mayor Bloomberg’s “New Housing Marketplace” plan allocates only around 4 percent of all City-assisted apartments to homeless people, even at a time of much worse homelessness.
- The City should also allocate a significant share of HPD-administered Federal housing vouchers to help homeless New Yorkers.

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

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<sup>1</sup> All nightly shelter census data in this briefing paper is from reports produced by the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The data in this briefing paper, which is consistent with City homelessness data reported for more than 25 years, is more comprehensive than the more limited data available on the DHS website. Since 2005 the DHS website has, for reasons that have never been explained publicly, excluded data on homeless families and individuals residing in several different types of municipal shelters. For this reason, currently the DHS website’s homepage fails to include approximately 1,300 to 1,400 homeless people sleeping each night in municipal shelters, including approximately 200 families (with approximately 600 people) who reside in homeless shelters administered by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development; approximately 370 people residing in DHS shelters for homeless veterans; and approximately 380 people residing each night in DHS “safe haven” shelters, which are restricted to chronically street homeless adults. (Note that the large majority of shelters for veterans and “safe haven” shelters were once included as part of DHS’s daily adult shelter census report.) However, note that this briefing paper 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, although currently there are approximately 150 to 200 homeless people in “stabilization beds” each night.

<sup>2</sup> Data for homeless single adults in municipal shelters is from three sources: (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 chronically 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.) As noted above, 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, although currently there are approximately 150 to 200 homeless people in “stabilization beds” each night.