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State of the Homeless 2008

Running in Place: The Bloomberg Administration's Failure to Change Course Amidst Rising Homelessness

March 27, 2008

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Overview of the Report

Part I: The Numbers – More New Yorkers Experienced Homelessness in 2007, Homeless Population Still High

- ◆ Last year, 102,187 different New Yorkers slept in homeless shelters, 5.8 percent more than the previous year and 23.4 percent more than six years ago.
- ◆ The NYC homeless shelter population remained at near-record levels, with around 35,000 people in shelters each night.
- ◆ 2007 was the worst year for family homelessness in modern history, with more than 9,000 families in shelters each night.



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Overview of the Report

Part II: Highlights of the Year in Homelessness

- ◆ **More NYC families seeking shelter, fewer homeless families moved to permanent housing.**
- ◆ **Bloomberg administration finally abandons “Housing Stability Plus” program – but replaces it with flawed “Work Advantage” program and still denies Federal housing aid to homeless families and individuals.**
- ◆ **City increases use of illegal boarding houses to shelter homeless adults, including many living with mental illness.**



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Overview of the Report

Part III: Three Immediate Steps to Reduce Homelessness

- 1. Restore priority for Federal housing aid – including Section 8 vouchers and public housing – to homeless New Yorkers.**
- 2. Accelerate the development of permanent supportive housing for homeless people living with mental illness and other special needs.**
- 3. Halt referrals of mentally-ill and disabled homeless New Yorkers to unsafe, illegal boarding houses.**



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Part I: The Numbers

NYC Homelessness in 2007:

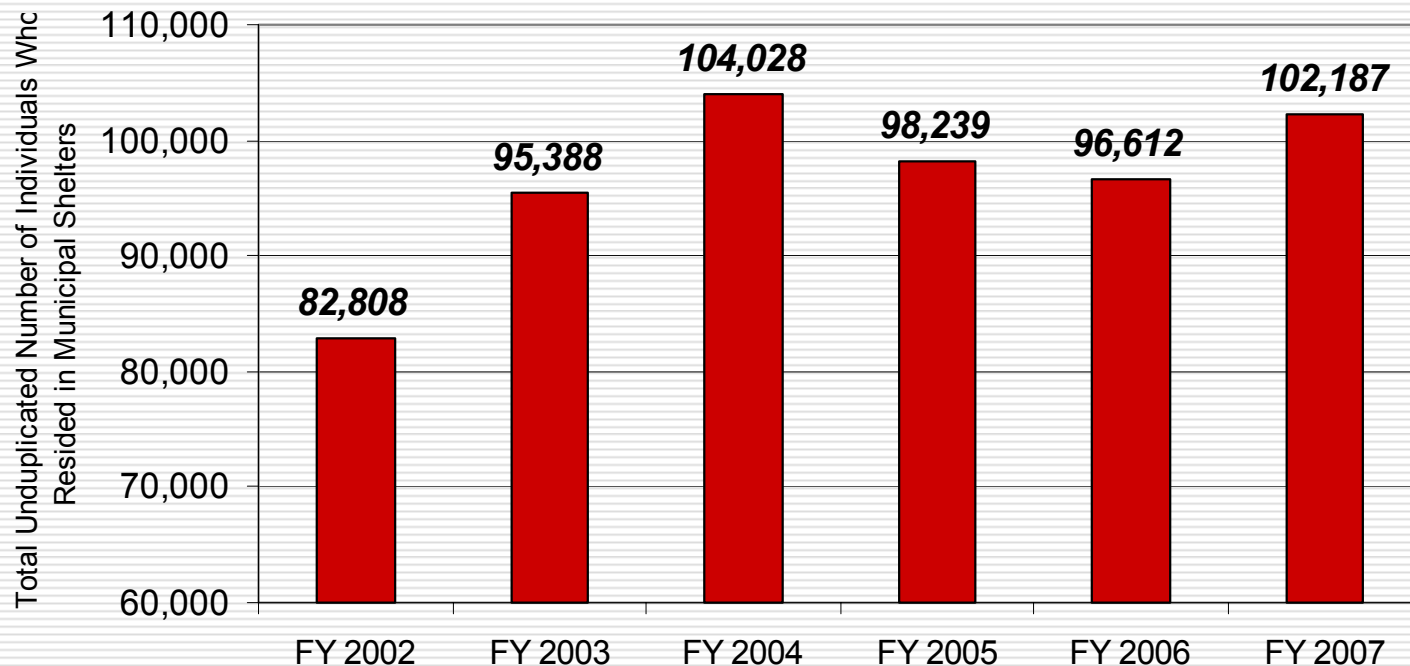
- >> **More New Yorkers experienced homelessness**
- >> **Homelessness continues at near-record levels**
- >> **2007: Worst year for NYC family homelessness since the Great Depression**



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More New Yorkers Became Homeless

**23.4 Percent More New Yorkers Experienced Homelessness During Past Six Years;
5.8 Percent More than Last Year**



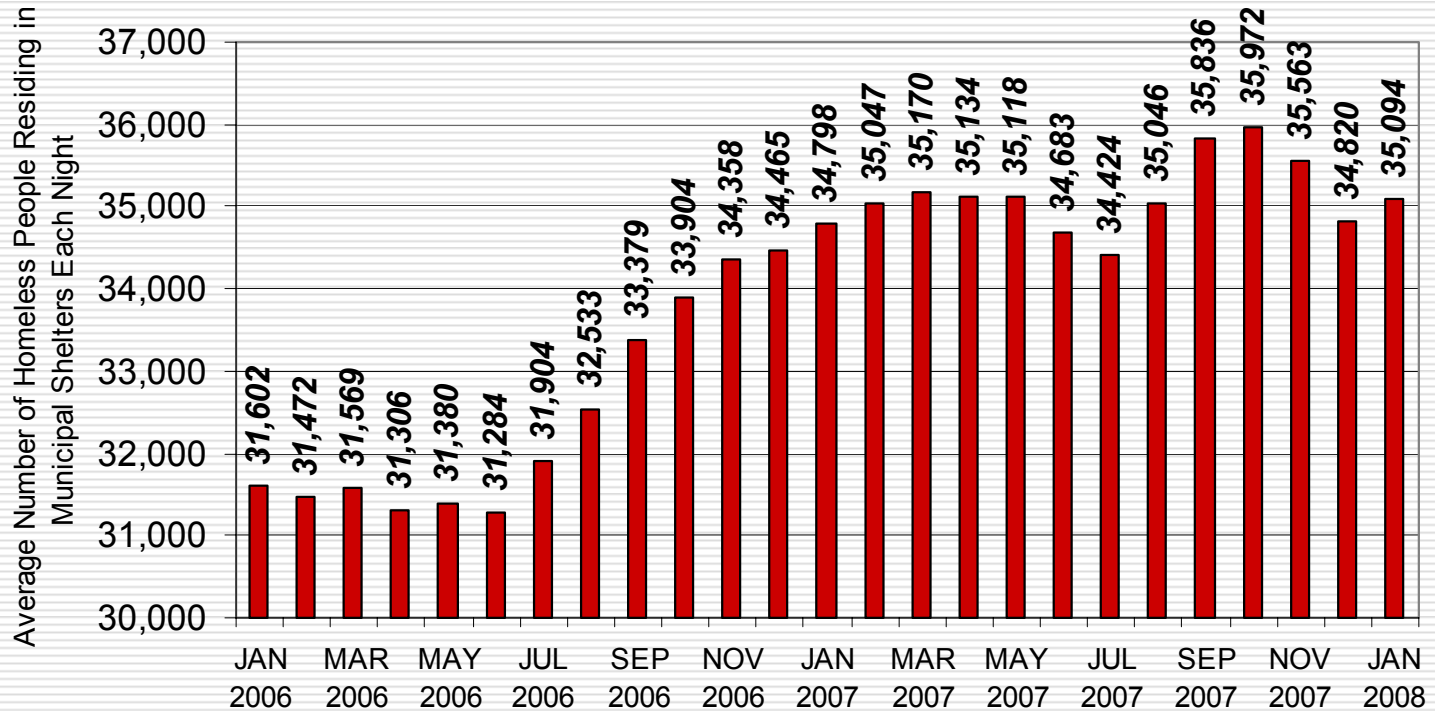
Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Reports



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Homeless Shelter Population Still High

NYC Nightly Homeless Shelter Population Remained at Near-Record Levels



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

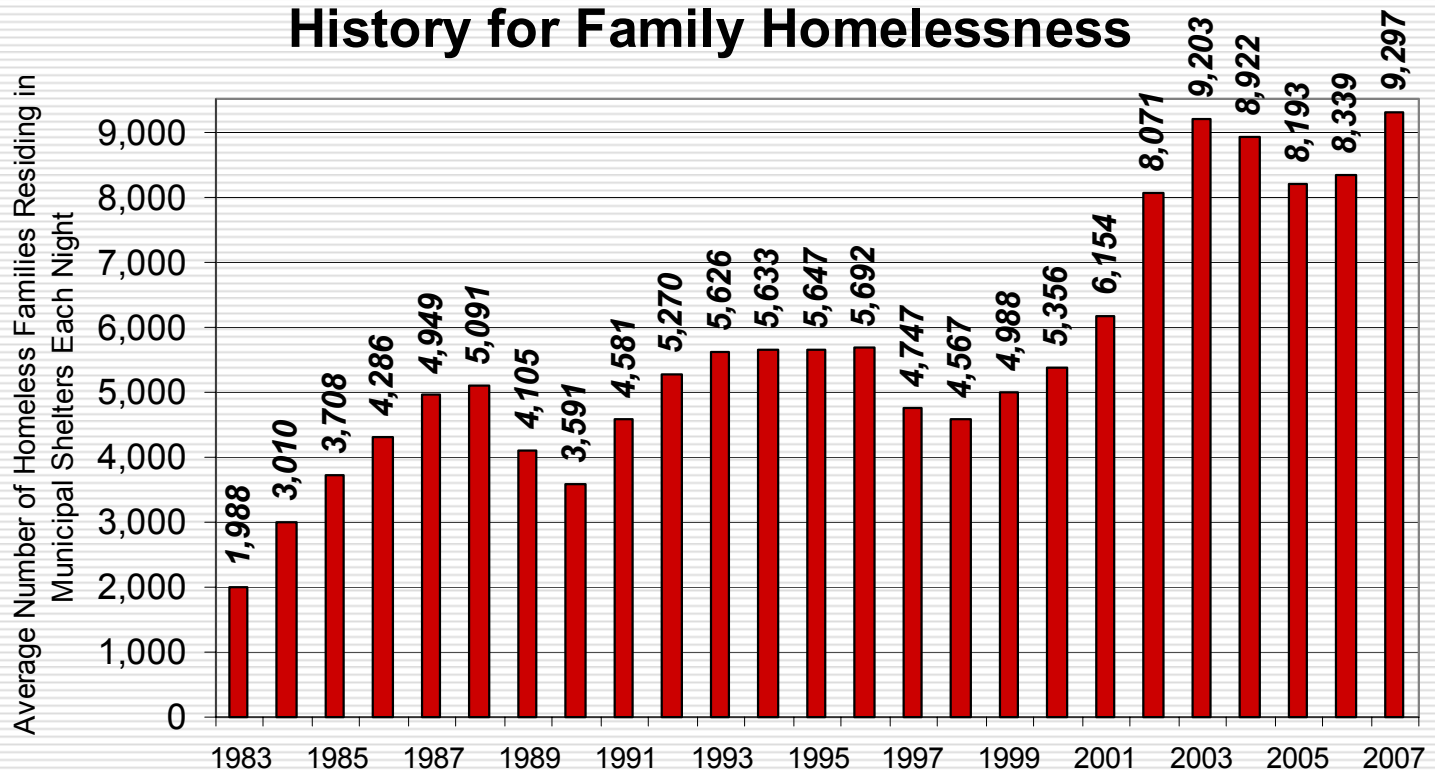


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Worst Year for Family Homelessness

2007 Was the Worst Year in Modern NYC History for Family Homelessness



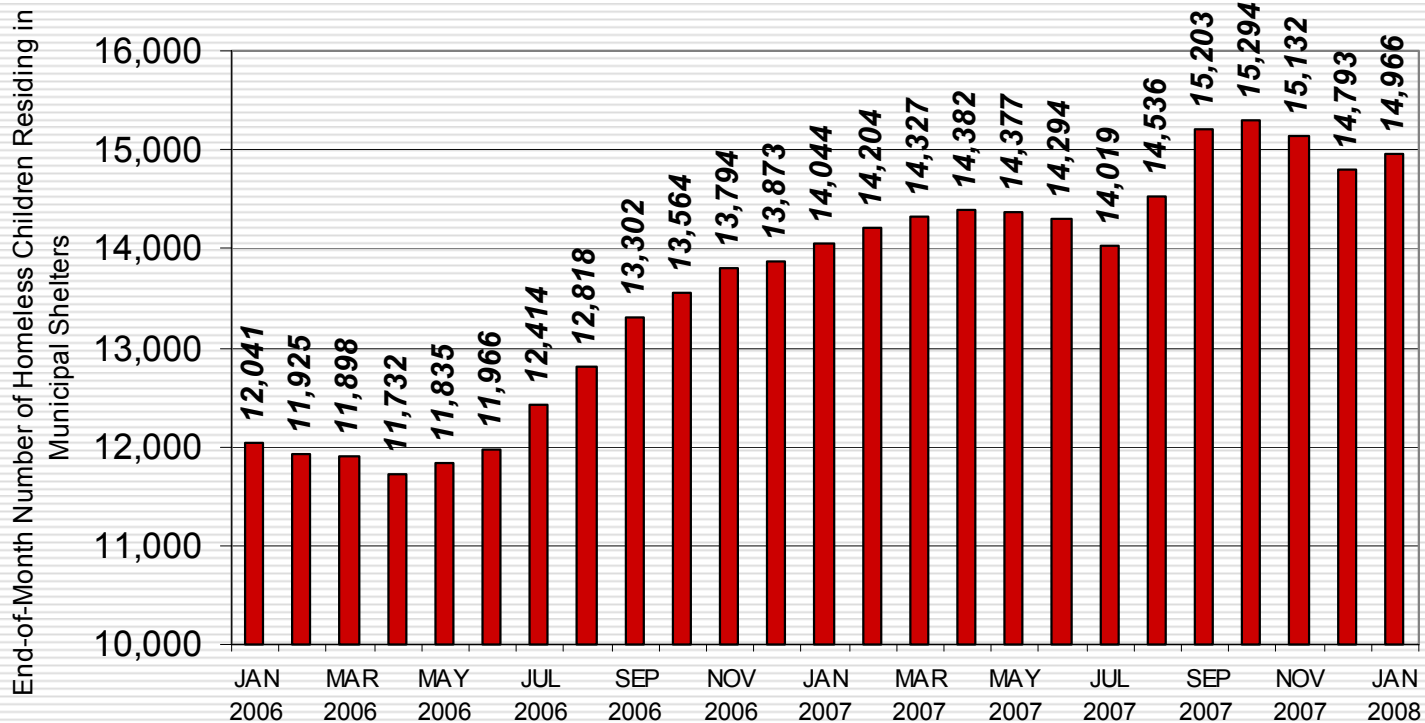
Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports



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More Homeless NYC Children

Number of Homeless Children in NYC Continued to Increase



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

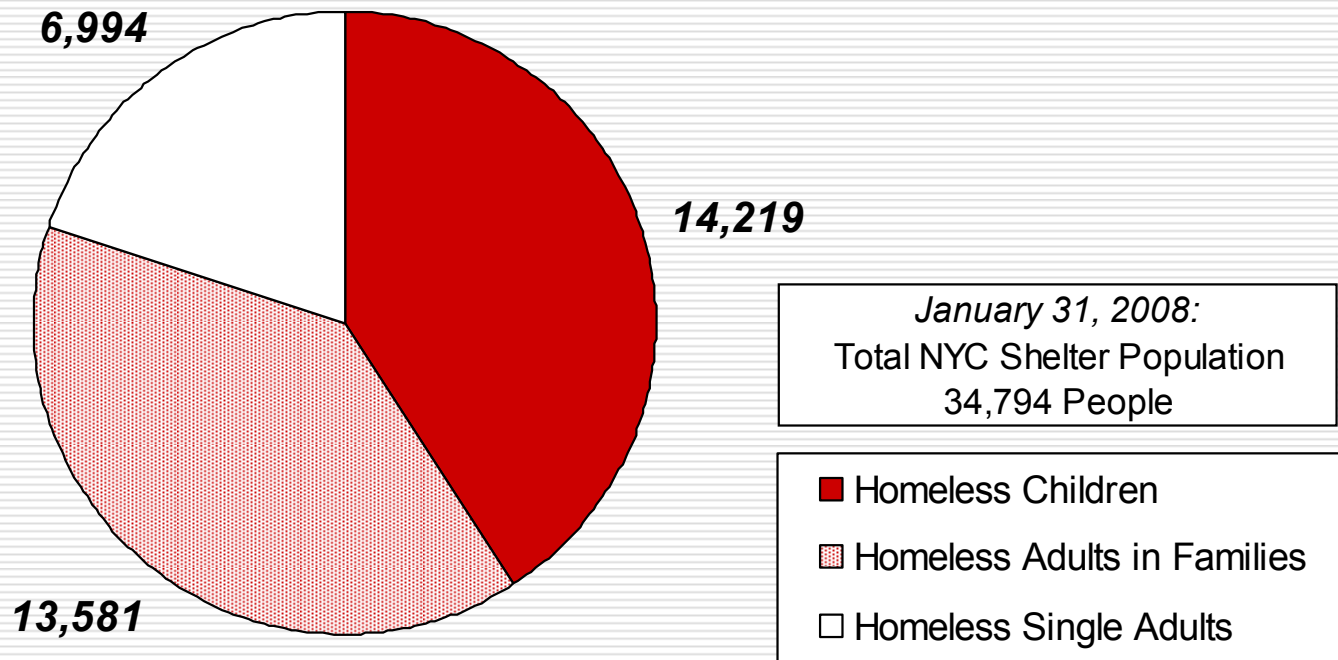


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Majority of Homeless New Yorkers in Families

Families Make Up Four of Every Five Homeless People in NYC Shelters



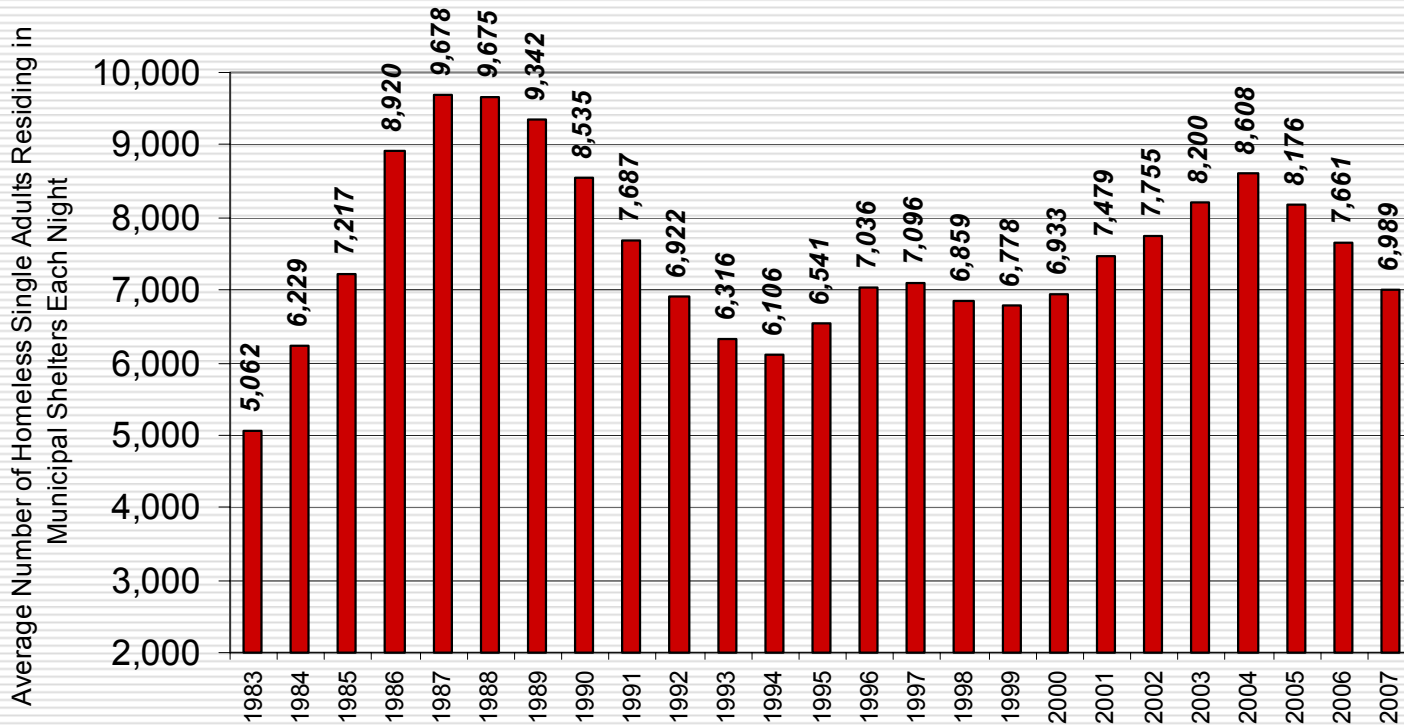
Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports



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Declines in Adult Homelessness

Number of Homeless Single Adults in Shelters Declines for Third Year



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

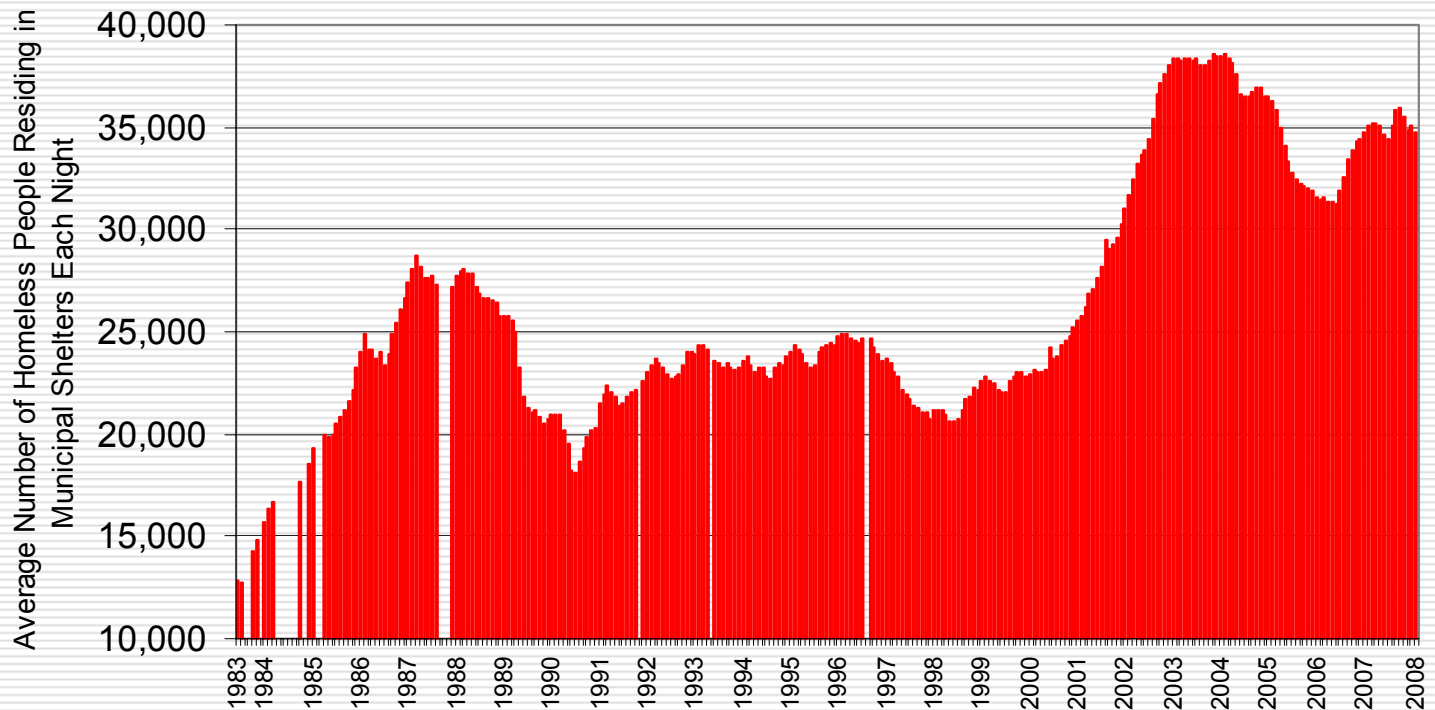


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NYC Homelessness Nearing Record Levels

NYC Homeless Shelter Population Once Again at 35,000 Children and Adults



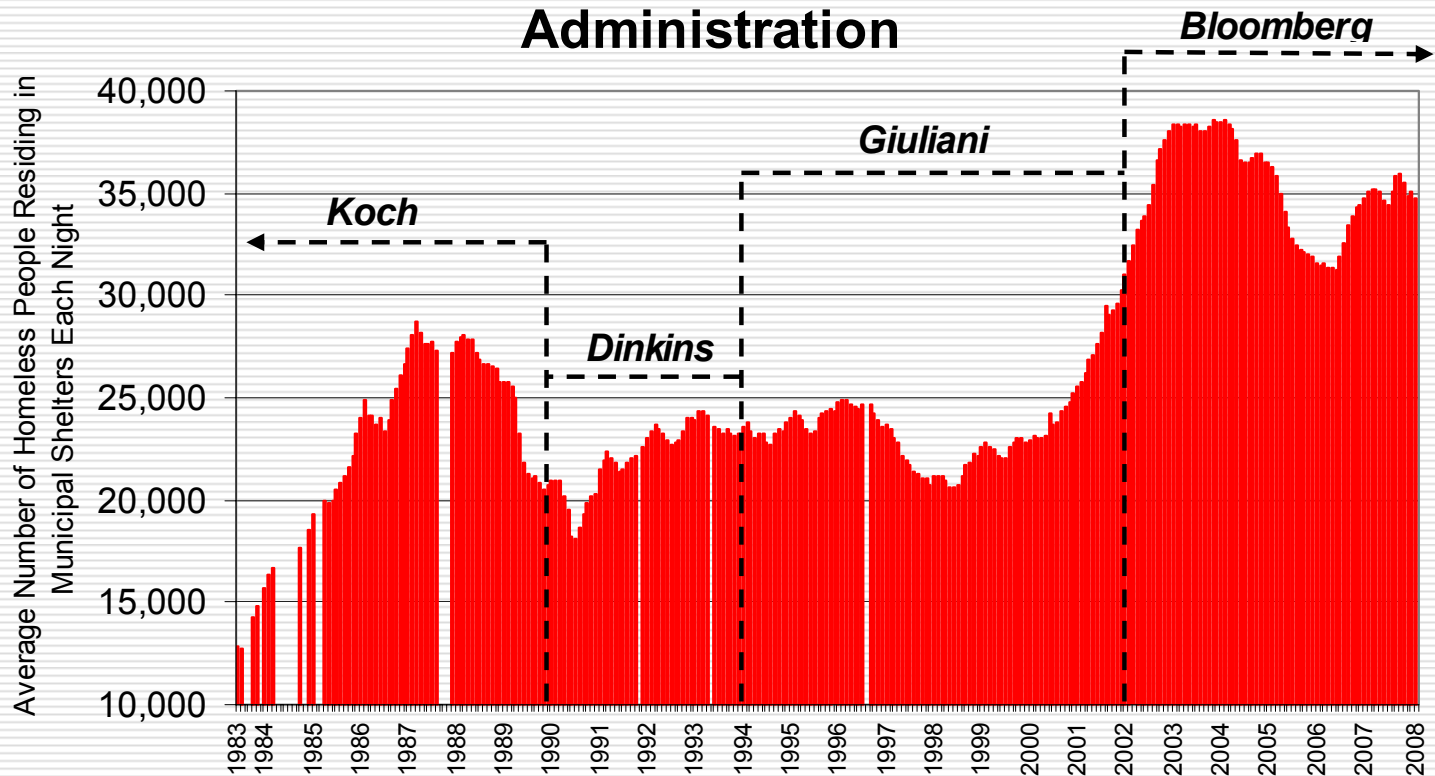
Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports



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Four Mayors and NYC Homelessness

More Homeless New Yorkers During Current Administration



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

Highlights of 2007:

- >> More NYC families seeking shelter, fewer homeless families moved to permanent housing.
- >> Bloomberg administration abandons failed “Housing Stability Plus” program, but maintains other deeply flawed policies.
- >> City increases use of illegal boarding houses to shelter homeless adults



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

Perfect Storm in 2007:

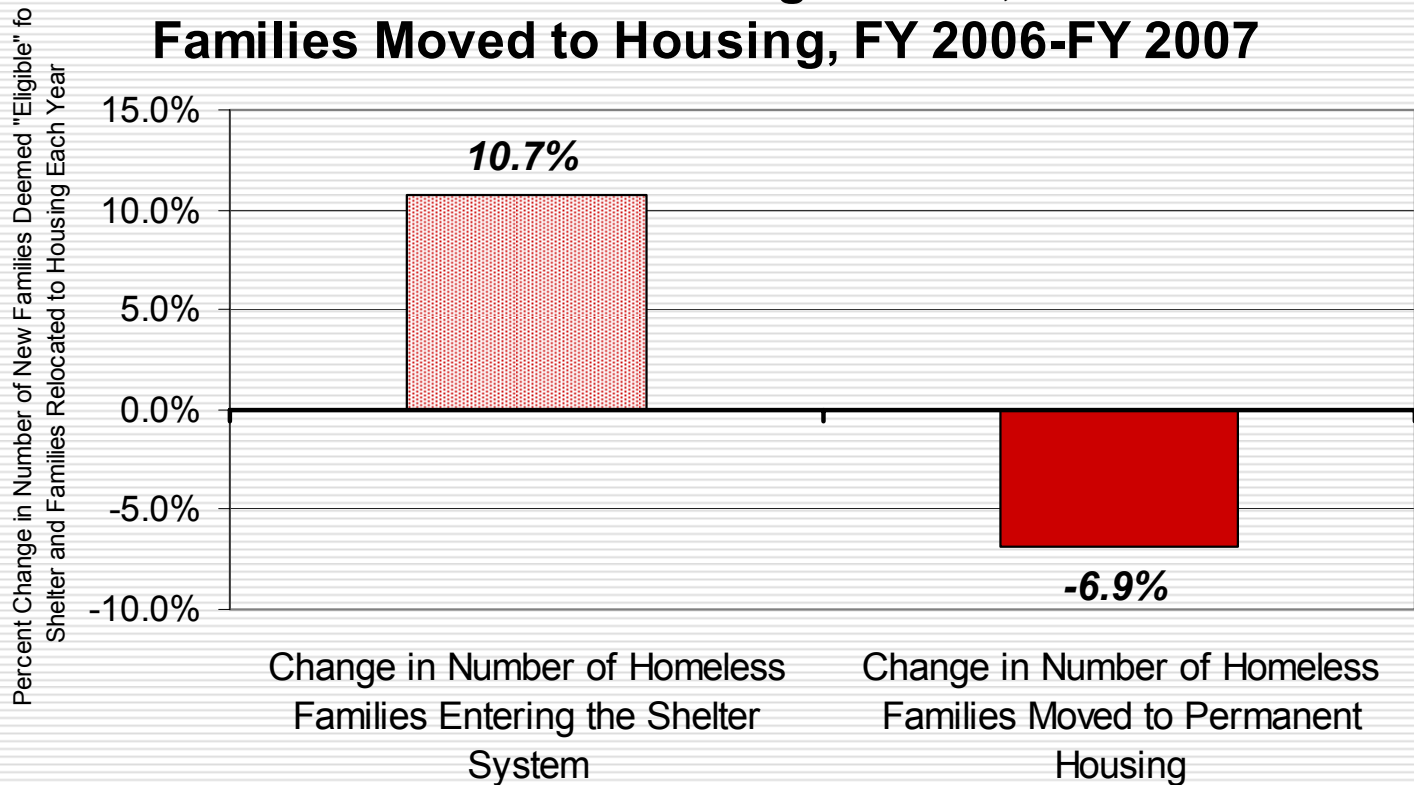
- >> 10.7 percent more NYC families entered the municipal shelter system.
- >> 6.9 percent fewer homeless families were relocated from shelter to permanent housing.



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More Homeless Families, Less Housing Aid

More Families Entering Shelter, Fewer Families Moved to Housing, FY 2006-FY 2007



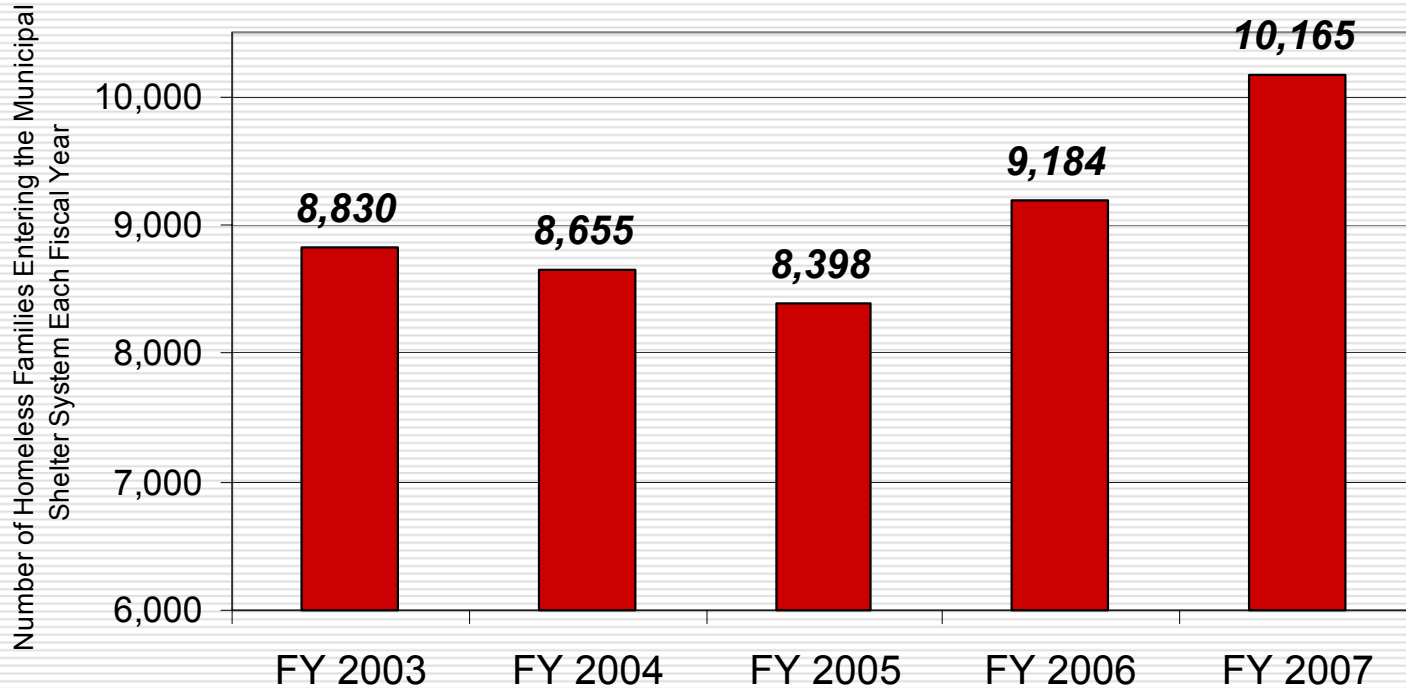
Source: Mayor's Management Reports



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More NYC Families Entering Shelters

Rising Number of Homeless Families Seeking Shelter -- Up 10.7 Percent Over Previous Year



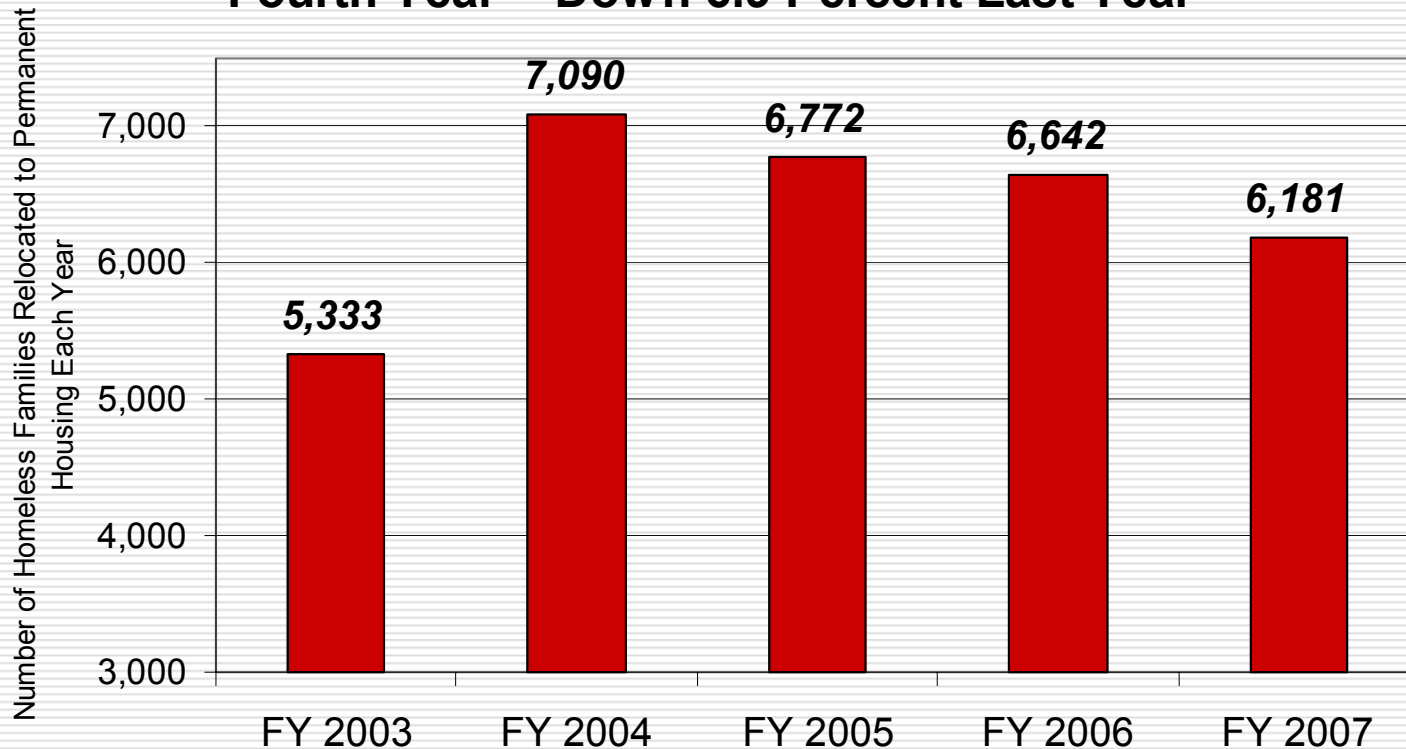
Source: Mayor's Management Reports



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Fewer Homeless Families Moved to Housing

Number of Families Moved to Housing Declines for Fourth Year -- Down 6.9 Percent Last Year



Source: Mayor's Management Reports



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

Cutting Off the Homeless from Federal Housing Aid:

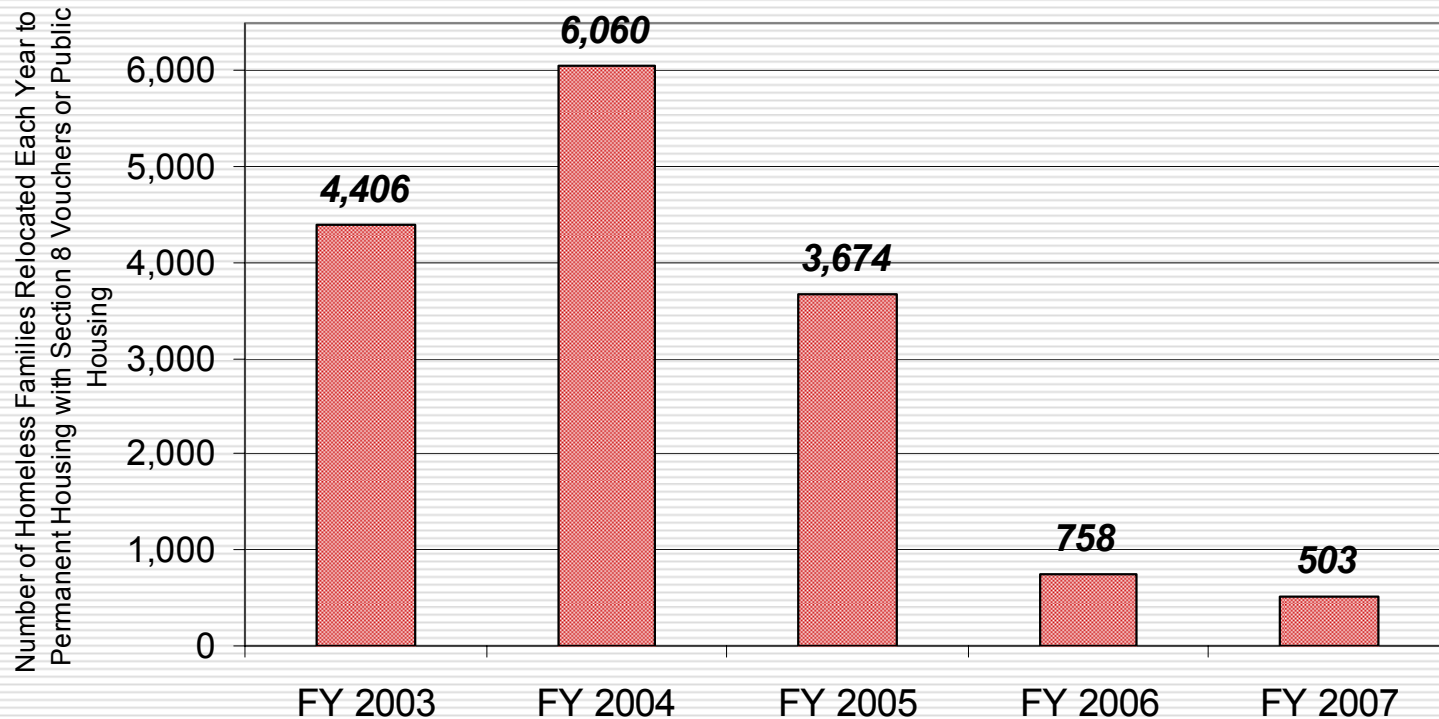
- >> In late 2004, the Bloomberg administration dramatically changed City homeless policy – cutting off homeless from priority for Federal housing programs including Section 8 vouchers and public housing.**
- >> Bloomberg administration officials claimed “cut-off” policy would lead to fewer families seeking shelter – but more families have entered the shelter system each year.**



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Homeless Cut Off from Federal Housing Aid

Sharp Drop in Homeless Families Moved to Housing Using Federal Housing Programs



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Reports



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

Less Housing Aid for Homeless Families Has Led to More City Taxpayer Dollars Spent on Emergency Shelter:

>> City now builds fewer City-funded apartments for homeless people than any time since the 1980s.

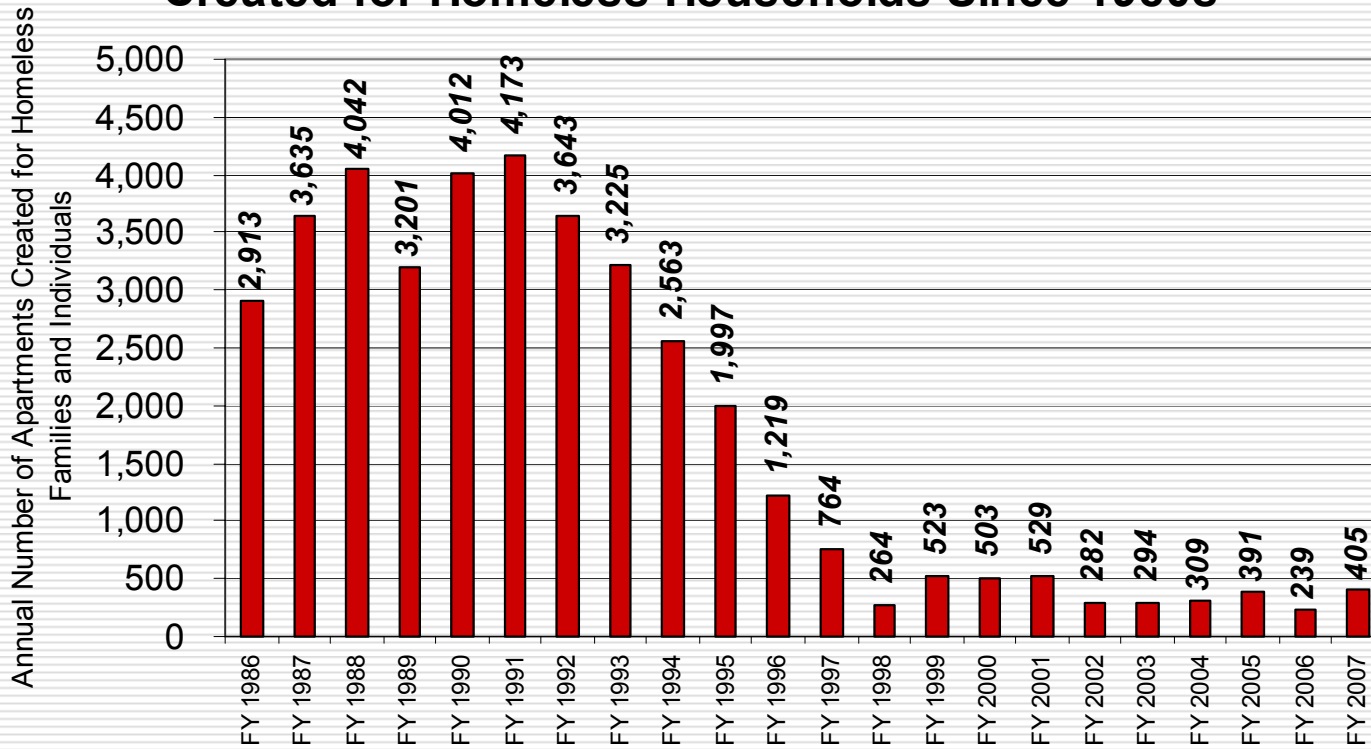
>> Over the past decade, total annual City expenditures on homeless shelter and services have doubled to more than \$735 million.



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Fewer New Apartments Created for the Homeless

Lowest Number of New City-Funded Apartments Created for Homeless Households Since 1980s



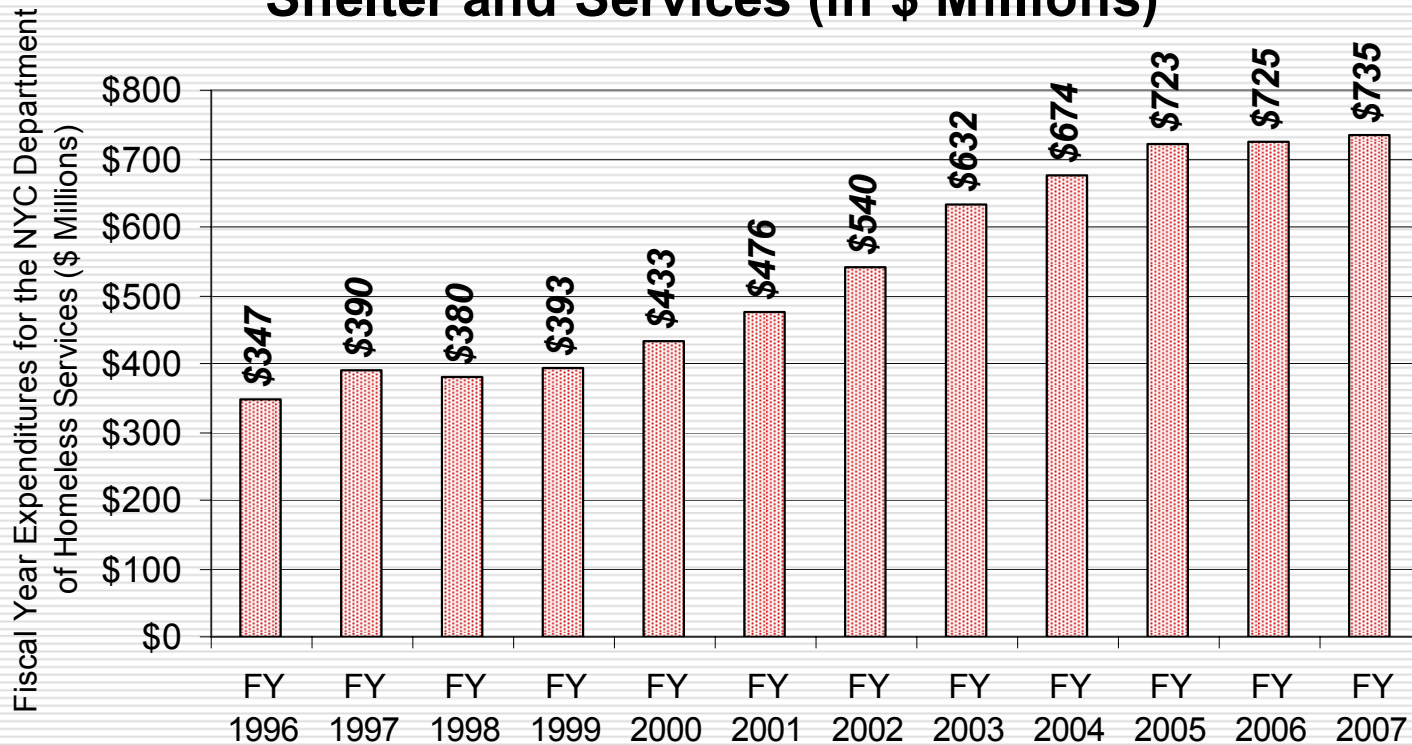
Source: Mayor's Management Reports



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More Taxpayer Dollars Spent on Shelter

Soaring City Expenditures on Homeless Shelter and Services (in \$ Millions)



Source: NYC Office of Management and Budget



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

City Increases Use of Illegal Boarding Houses to Shelter Homeless Adults:

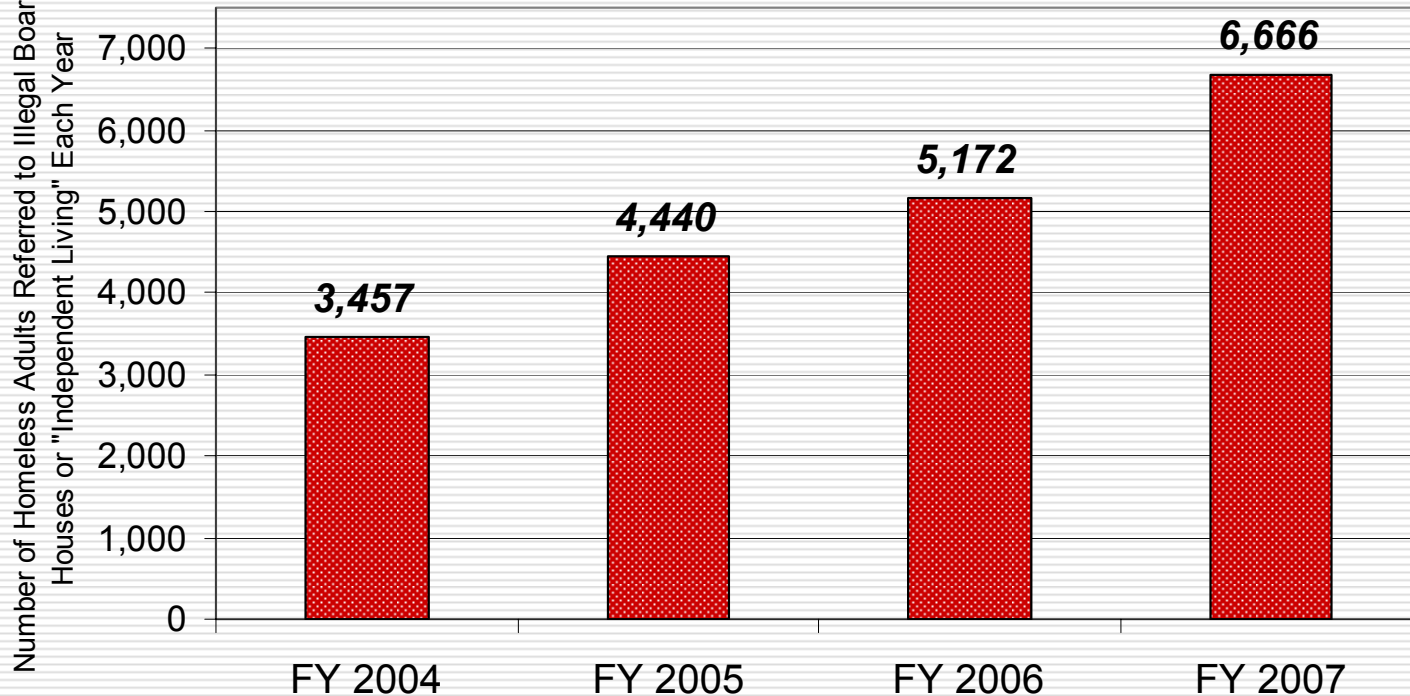
- >> City has referred hundreds of homeless adults – including many living with mental illness – to more than 65 unsafe, illegal boarding houses.**
- >> City housing and buildings inspectors have issued vacate orders to at least 11 illegal boarding houses due to health and safety risks.**



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Homeless Adults Sent to Illegal Dwellings

**Number of Homeless Adults Referred by City to
Illegal Boarding Houses or "Independent Living"**



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Reports



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Part II: Highlights of the Past Year

New City Policy Denied Shelter to Homeless Families:

>> In October 2007, City began denying emergency shelter to re-applicant homeless families – many children and adults forced to sleep in subways, parks, hospital emergency rooms, or other public spaces.

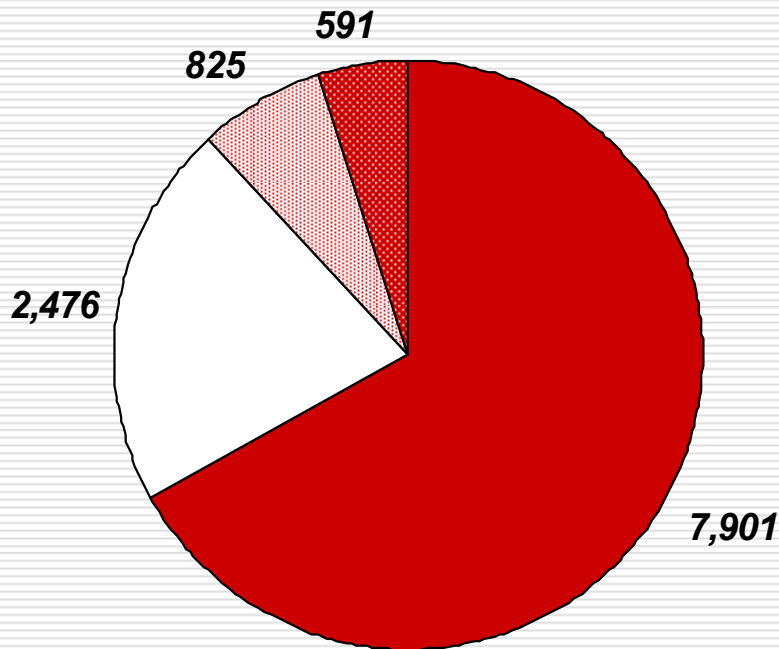
>> City data show high error rate on applications – last year 33 percent of all homeless families deemed “eligible” for shelter were forced to apply two or more times.



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City Mistakes on Shelter Requests

One-Third of Homeless Families Deemed "Eligible" for Shelter by City Forced to Submit Multiple Applications



Total Number of Homeless Families Deemed "Eligible" for Shelter in FY 2007:
11,792 Families

- Families found "eligible" on first application
- Families found "eligible" on second application
- ▨ Families found "eligible" on third application
- ▩ Families found "eligible" on four or more applications

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Reports



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Part III: Immediate Reforms

Three Immediate Steps to Reduce NYC Homelessness

- 1. Restore priority for Federal housing aid – including Section 8 vouchers and public housing – to homeless New Yorkers.**
- 2. Accelerate the development of permanent supportive housing for homeless people living with mental illness and other special needs.**
- 3. Halt referrals of homeless New Yorkers to unsafe, illegal boarding houses.**



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Part III: Immediate Reforms

Facing Economic Downturn, City Must Act Now:

>> During the last two economic recessions (1990-1991 and 2001), New York City experienced significant increases in homelessness.

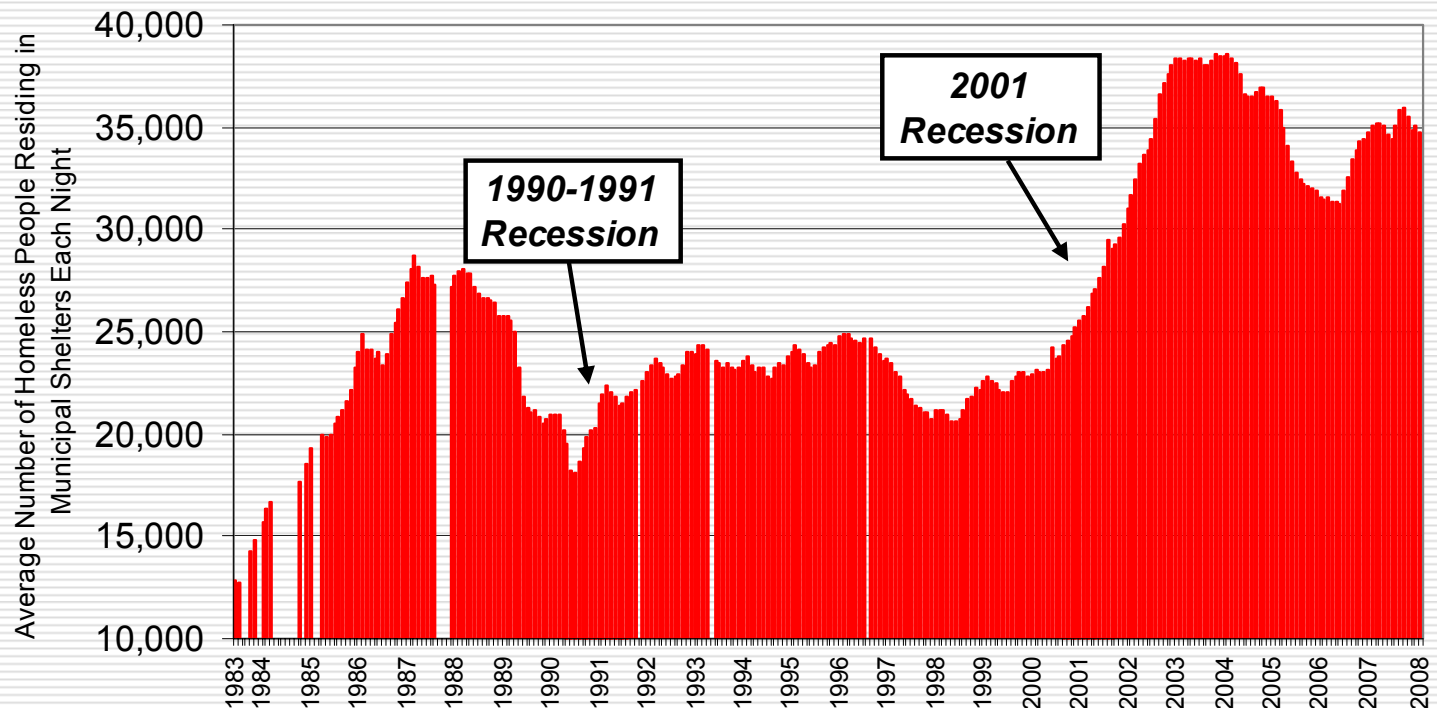
>> City officials can implement immediate reforms to help homeless families and individuals move rapidly from shelters to secure, safe, permanent housing.



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Homelessness During Recessions

NYC Homelessness Worsened During the Last Two Economic Recessions



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports



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Part III: Immediate Reforms

1. Target Federal Housing Aid to the Homeless:

>> In late 2004, the Bloomberg administration cut off homeless from longstanding priority for Federal housing programs, including Section 8 vouchers and public housing.

>> In January 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the City will give out 22,000 new Section 8 vouchers – none to the homeless.

>> Reversing the City's misguided policy will move thousands of homeless families to permanent housing – and will save City taxpayer dollars spent on emergency shelter.



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Part III: Immediate Reforms

2. Accelerate Construction of Supportive Housing:

>> In 2005, the City and State signed a ten-year agreement to provide supportive housing for homeless people living with mental illness and other special needs.

>> However, more than half of the newly-constructed supportive housing – 3,276 units of the planned 6,250 new units – will not be built until at least 2011.

>> City and State officials should accelerate the development of supportive housing for homeless people with special needs.



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Part III: Immediate Reforms

3. Halt Referrals of Homeless Adults to Illegal Dwellings:

>> City has referred hundreds of homeless adults – including many living with mental illness – to more than 65 unsafe, illegal boarding houses.

>> City inspectors have issued vacate orders to at least 11 illegal boarding houses due to health and fire safety risks – forcing the residents to return to shelters or the streets.

>> City officials should halt referrals of homeless adults living with mental illness or other disabilities to illegal boarding houses.



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Data Sources and Acknowledgments

Data Sources

All data used in this report is from the NYC Department of Homeless Services (including “Critical Activities Reports” and shelter census reports); the “Mayor’s Management Reports” for various years; and the NYC Office of Management and Budget.

Acknowledgments

Report prepared by Patrick Markee, Senior Policy Analyst, Coalition for the Homeless.

For more information, please visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org.