

Homelessness in USA

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Abstract: According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness by the end of 2014 there were more than 578,424 homeless people in the U.S.A. This already large number is continuing to increase, and this problem is becoming a risk to the future of many Americans. Homelessness is viewed as a personal choice or mistake, such as being addicted to drugs or alcohol, or other reasons like unemployment, or losing a house during an economic collapse. While conducting my research on this topic, I noticed that there has been much research on homelessness in the past and even presently, however the effort put into a solution for this problem by the government and the people has not yet been enough. In this summary of my research I will include the facts, reasons, and solutions to end homelessness in the United States of America.

Keywords: Homelessness in USA, facts, reasons, and solutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are some facts about homelessness that already known and proved by government.

- According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that One quarter of homeless people are children. That means almost more that means almost more than 140.000 from the homelessness are children!
- Tens of thousands of veterans are homeless (HUD). So the people who fought for America are homeless!
- According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP), 90% from the homeless women are victims of physical or sexual abuse.
- According to (HUD) , One in five homeless people suffers from untreated severe mental illness, So University of Pennsylvania tracked nearly more than 5000 homeless people for 2 years, and they discovered that treatment the homeless from physical and mental illnesses cost less than shelter and hospital services.
- According to the NLCHP, one eighth of the nation's supply of low-income housing has been permanently lost since 2001. The U.S. needs at least 7 million more affordable apartments for low-income families, and as a result, millions of families spend more than half of their monthly income on rent.
- The government does not help as much as you think. There is enough public rental assistance to help about one out of every four extremely low-income households. Those who do not receive help are on multi-year waiting lists.
- A 2014 survey of 187 cities by the NLCHP found that 24 percent of cities make it a city-wide crime to beg in public, 33 percent make it illegal to stand around or loiter anyplace in the city, 18 percent make it a crime to sleep anywhere in public, 43 percent make it illegal to sleep in your car, and 53 percent make it illegal to sit or lie down in particular public places. And the number of cities criminalizing homelessness is steadily increasing.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Heidi Sommer in her research "Homelessness in Urban America:

A Review of the Literature" Analysis the related Literature and said"

In the 1980s, homelessness attracted a great deal of attention from the media, advocates, politicians, and the public. Every level of government responded to the visibly growing problem. Virtually every sector of society intervened. Interest in the

issue seems to have waned considerably since then, but the problem continues to grow, particularly in large urban areas. Temporary homelessness has increased from a decade ago and threatens individuals and families further up the income distribution. Public policies continue to address the problem, but the nature and scale of the responses have changed. Early state and federal policies were appropriate for what was viewed as a temporary result of economic recession providing shelter and provisions to the homeless. These efforts expanded to prevent the growth of homelessness and create long-term housing for the chronically disabled homeless. Today these trends continue, accompanied by efforts in revitalized urban areas to restrict the visibility and behavior of the homeless. When shelter and resources seem abundant, housed citizens are often frustrated when the highly visible homeless refuse to use local service programs. Perhaps as a result, they support punitive policies that criminalize activities such as sleeping or panhandling in public places. Homeless policy is at a crossroads. We can improve the availability and mix of service programs and encourage the chronic homeless to use them, or we can give up on those reluctant to seek help and try to make them less visible. We can grapple with the question of whether policies should do more to address the structural determinants of homelessness which many claim lead to both new and repeated episodes of homelessness. We have a wealth of information about the homeless population and their needs, and a growing body of research on the effectiveness of alternative solutions. There are many potential responses, but the current economic prosperity and budget surpluses provide the ideal setting for expanded and innovative efforts to address this old social problem.”

- **Which U.S. cities have the greatest number of homeless people?**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides state-level estimations of homelessness every year and also collects data on many metropolitan areas. By official measures, the U.S. has seen a 9 percent decline in homeless population since 2007, from about 672,000 to 610,000 last year. In the U.S., about 195 of every 100,000 people were homeless in 2013. Colorado, with a rate of 193 per 100,000, is the closest to that average. The worst in terms of homelessness is the District of Columbia with a rate of 1,133 per 100,000 people. Because D.C. is a metropolitan area, its count is far above states, which aren't comparable in this scenario. For example, New York City is at 768 per 100,000, a lower rate than D.C., but nearly 10 times the homeless population. For this data, it's unfair to include D.C. as the “worst state” in terms of homelessness. States with high and low homeless rates are all over the country. The highest rates of homelessness among states are in Hawaii (465 per 100,000), followed by New York (399) and California (367). lowest homeless counts per capita come in Mississippi (81 per 100,000), Indiana (94) and Kansas (94).

Problems faced by people who are homeless:

The basic problem of homelessness is the human need for personal shelter, warmth and safety, which can be literally vital. Other basic difficulties include:

- 1- Personal security, quiet, and privacy, especially for sleeping.
- 2- Safekeeping of bedding, clothing and possessions, which may have to be carried at all times
- 3- Hygiene and shaving facilities.
- 4- Cleaning and drying clothes.
- 5- Obtaining, preparing and storing food in small quantities.
- 6- Keeping contacts, without a permanent location or mailing address.
- 7- Hostility and legal powers against urban vagrancy.

Homeless people face many problems beyond the lack of a safe and suitable home. They are often faced with many social disadvantages also, reduced access to private and public services and reduced access to vital necessities:

- Reduced access to health care and dental services.
- Limited access to education.
- Increased risk of suffering from violence and abuse.
- General rejection or discrimination from other people.
- Loss of usual relationships with the mainstream

- Not being seen as suitable for employment.
- Reduced access to banking services
- Reduced access to communications technology

According to Homeless Resource Network there are Factors contributing to Homelessness such as:

- **Decline in Public Assistance :** “Current TANF benefits and food stamps combined are below the poverty level in every state; in fact, the median TANF benefit for a family of three is approximately one-third of the poverty level. Thus, contrary to popular opinion, welfare does not provide relief from poverty.”
- **Divorce:** Divorce often leaves one of the spouses homeless. Most often it’s the father, but sometimes it’s the mother and children or everyone involved.
- **Domestic Violence:** Battered women who live in poverty are often forced to choose between abusive relationships and homelessness.
- **Drug and Alcohol related problems:** Rates of alcohol and drug abuse are disproportionately high among the population without homes.
- **Illness:** For families and individuals struggling to pay the rent, a serious illness or disability can start a downward spiral into homelessness, beginning with a lost job, depletion of savings to pay for care, and eventual eviction.
- **Lack of affordable housing:** The lack of affordable housing has led to high rent burdens (rents which absorb a high proportion of income), overcrowding, and substandard housing.
- **Lack of child support:** In families where child support is ordered but not paid, the decrease in income can lead to an inability to pay rent, utilities, or both.
- **Low wages :** Declining wages have put housing out of reach for many workers: in every state, more than the minimum wage is required to afford a one- or two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent
- **Mental Illness:** Approximately 20-25% of single adult people experiencing homelessness suffer from some form of severe and persistent mental illness.
- **Natural Disaster/Fire:** Situations where due to chance a fire, tornado, flood or hurricane renders housing inhabitable.
- **Physical Disabilities:** Disabled individuals may be unable to work or find appropriate employment. For those receiving SSI, they often struggle to obtain and maintain stable housing.
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:** This disorder is common with veterans and those that have been in violent situations. It can make it difficult to have a stable life.
- **Why do some homeless people avoid homeless shelters?**

According to social out cast website they gave some good reason why some homeless avoid their shelters and here are some:

1- Safety:

A significant number homeless people evade utilizing sanctuary benefits to trepidation that their personal security Might a chance to be compromised. Whilst A large portion shelters detract precautions the place useful they are frequently all the run, through necessity, on skeleton disappointments and outrage on his/her staff levels from claiming volunteers who would inclined not professionally qualified will manage brutal behavior What's more all things considered can't ensure individual wellbeing. There might great make vicious offenders, addicts and rationally imbalanced people offering the room in which you might be required to rest.

2- Personal belongings:

Homeless people travel light. They own very little and you can be sure that the few things they do possess and carry are either necessary for their survival or they consider the items very precious. They protect the few belongings that they do

have tenaciously. Most shelters do not have secure storage available which means that personal belongings can be left lying around and vulnerable to theft.

3- Pets:

Homeless people are socially excluded. If they are spoken to at all by the general population it is more often than not to be jeered at. Sometimes they can go weeks, months or even years without speaking to a single soul. This isolation can be one of the most difficult aspects homeless people have to deal with. Many would rather share what little food they can gather with a dog in exchange for the companionship they provide than be completely alone. It is not hard to understand why they would be reluctant to give this up but very few shelters or state supported accommodation programs make provisions for pets.

4- Daytime Hours:

Most shelters are nighttime only. This means that come the morning (and it is usually very early) you have just a short time to get your gear together before being turned back out onto the streets. It matters not whether it might be rain, sleet, snow or hail, you have to leave and you may not return prior to the time allotted for opening the following evening. If you show up late, no matter what the reason may be, this will usually result in missing your spot for that night. That is, of course, if there were any beds left available in the first place.

5- Privacy:

People need personal space. Staying in a shelter means sharing a dormitory, sharing a meal room and sharing bathroom facilities with fifty or so other residents. Ever tried sleeping in a room full of fifty other people all chatting, laughing, coughing, snoring and breaking wind? It is worth remembering that some of these emergency 'shelters' consist of no more than a mattress on a church floor. It may be warmer than the streets but it doesn't necessarily mean you will be able to get more sleep.

• Does the government have a responsibility to fight homelessness?

People's Tribune website blame the government about the homelessness in their article "Homelessness continues to skyrocket in USA . It is the worst expression of the poverty being produced by a failing market economy. It is time for the government to outlaw homelessness — rather than the homeless — and take responsibility for guaranteeing that everyone has a home. Yet the government seems to be headed in the other direction. Federal spending for public housing has fallen drastically over the past 30 years. In Atlanta, the city is planning to demolish thousands of public housing units and displace nearly 10,000 people. In Louisiana, every level of government continues to make clear it has no plans to house the poor who lost what little they had in Katrina. In Fresno, California, and elsewhere, tent cities erected by the homeless are attacked and dismantled by the police. In St. Petersburg, Florida, the homeless are herded into a city-run tent encampment where they are photographed, given identity bracelets and made to pass through police check points — in other words, they are in an outdoor prison. Are concentration camps next? People, must stand unconditionally on the side of the homeless, and demand that the government, acting as society's representative, provide housing — not shelter beds, not tents, not jail cells, but housing — for the homeless. If the market economy cannot provide homes for all of us, then the government must do so. Other countries have done this. Scotland has created an enforceable right to housing, and France is moving in this direction. We have plenty of wealth as a society to house everyone. There is plenty of housing. In fact, the U.S government owns millions of vacant housing units. So, why is anyone homeless? Homelessness is the end result of a market economy that will not provide anything for those whose labor is no longer needed in an increasingly automated system of production. People are becoming homeless because workers are losing their jobs to high technology. Having no job in a market economy means you can end up homeless, even though there is plenty of housing. The law of private property, upon which this system is based, will not allow for anyone to get something for nothing. We come together in a human society to take care of one another's needs. If not for this, then what is society for? How can we stand by while our brothers and sisters are homeless? We have the money and resources. We just have to force the government to do what is right — provide a home for everyone who needs one." So the American people blame the government about the homelessness and they not doing like others countries doing. In Saudi Arabia it is rare to see homeless person life in the streets, but there are poor people at least with roof above them, and for me that is the most important thing in life.

Can we end Homelessness?

Christine Schanes says there are 3 ways to start with to end homelessness:

Step One: Open public toilets 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with showers and laundry facilities. “Giving homeless people access to public toilets and showers with laundry facilities shows respect for and helps with restoration of their human dignity. Having lost nearly every worldly possession, homeless men, women and children are still human beings and have, just like housed people, their basic human needs. A homeless person is often left searching for a public toilet and an available shower. He or she may not have the funds to spend at a laundromat.”

Step Two: Support transitional housing with social services where individuals, couples and families can live. “Most homeless shelters are temporary facilities where people can live for twenty to thirty days. Only a few shelters in every city permit people to stay more than one year. The concept behind temporary shelters is that these shelters are just that - temporary places where a person or family can live in a stable, supportive environment during a time of crisis. Often these shelters help the residents connect with government programs in their area.”

Step Three: Turn a closed military base into a self-sufficient village where homeless men, women and children could reside. “Finding affordable housing is the ultimate challenge facing a homeless person. However, using a closed military base as the setting for a self-sufficient village created with the assistance of nonprofit organizations would solve this challenge for homeless people.”

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