What will it take to end homelessness.

URBAN
INSTITUTE · ELEVATE · THE · DEBATE

What Will It Take To End Homelessness?

MARTHA R. BURT

*The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessar
of the Institute, its trustees, or its sponsors.*

Homelessness did not disappear in the 1990s, despite the natio
day, at least 800,000 people are homeless in the United States, i
statistics, however, do not tell the whole story.

Homelessness in America is a "revolving-door" crisis. Many pe
homeless every day. During a year's time, four or five times as
particular day. Calculations from different sources show that i
people experienced homelessness at some time during an aver
people enter and leave homelessness during a year, families re
during a typical year, between 900,000 and 1.4 million children

Annual homelessness figures exceed 1 percent of the total U.S.
people in this country. Even though many of these people are l
out of every 10 poor people in America facing homelessness at
working. Homelessness stems from desperate poverty combin
their most troubled members. These circumstances explain wh
in a period as short as a year.

Personal difficulties, such as mental disabilities or job loss, may
high number of people who fall into homelessness every year. .
rather than better. Current levels of housing costs, coupled wit
working poor out of their homes. Although the availability of h
meeting the needs of people once they become homeless is no

A concerted national strategy is needed to prevent homelessne
become inevitable. That strategy must include new housing res
societal factors contributing to homelessness. Each communit
provide support services for those in need. Only strategies that
eliminate homelessness in this country.

WHY HOMELESSNESS HERE, AND WHY NOW?

Structural, personal, and political factors influence the level of
Structural factors in the United States that have fueled the prol

- Changing housing markets for extremely low-income fa[milies]... poverty incomes out of the market.

- Dwindling employment opportunities for people with a [...] between rich and poor.

- The removal of institutional supports for people with sev[...] long-term hospitalization for the mentally ill, are leaving [...]

- Racial, ethnic, and class discrimination in housing, along [...] alternatives, persists in many areas.

If housing were inexpensive, or people could earn enough to a[...] housing costs have risen steadily across the country, and they h[...] housing is concentrated among households with incomes belo[...] people entering homelessness. At the same time, people with li[...] enough money to raise their incomes above the poverty level, [...]

Once structural factors have created the conditions for homele[...] his or her home. Many factors can make a poor person more s[...] training, mental or physical disability, lack of family to rely on ([...] without the presence of structural fault lines, these personal vu[...]

Public policies may moderate the effects of both structural and[...] guarantee their citizens housing, and many provide supports f[...] beyond those available in the United States. Universal health in[...] programs reduce the probability of homelessness, even in plac[...] the pressure on household budgets.

In the United States, dramatic reductions in federally supporte[...] in safety net programs, place individuals and families squeezed[...] homelessness. A certain proportion of these people will experi[...] they are struggling with substance abuse, mental illness, or bot[...] reach of low-wage worker households, then homelessness is li[...]

A SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESS ADULTS TODAY

On any given day, the adult population using homeless assistan[...] Another 15 percent are women by themselves, 15 percent are [...] but not with children.[2] Because families are mostly likely to qu[...] individuals to be homeless, or to be homeless for long. Unatta[...] more likely to be homeless and to experience long or repeated [...]

In terms of racial and ethnic composition, little difference exis[...] proportions (40 to 41 percent) are African American and white[...] and 1 percent are another race. The high representation of mi[...] stems from their higher likelihood of being very poor and has [...] homeless people who rely on homeless assistance programs re[...] and 9 percent in rural areas.

Income and Work

Half of all homeless adults receive less than $300 per month–in[...] level. In addition, 62 percent have at least a high school diplom[...] surveyed, although only 13 percent held a regular job. Almost [...] by far the most common type of assistance. Homeless families [...] report; most single people's *ineligibility* for welfare helps expl[...]

Disabilities

Many homeless adults have physical and other types of disabili[...] Problems with alcohol, drugs, and mental health among home[...]

adults using homeless services, 31 percent reported a combina
drugs) within the past year. An additional 17 percent reported p
problems. Further, 12 percent reported only problems with alc
in four homeless adults did not report any mental health or su

Childhood Homelessness

The homeless population includes not only adults but also the
of homeless people are children in homeless families. These ch
serious difficulties, including physical, cognitive, emotional, an
greater risk of homelessness in adulthood.

Most children living with homeless parents are very young (42
vulnerable in the event of household disruptions. Children livir
by homelessness. Three out of five homeless people are parent
only one in four of these children lives with the homeless pare

Children of homeless mothers are much more likely to stay wi
fathers (7 percent). Children of homeless fathers typically live v
their homeless mothers tend to live with relatives other than th
foster care is a strong predictor of future homelessness.

Predictors of Homelessness

As noted earlier, societal factors create the conditions within w
factors, extreme poverty (incomes at less than half the federal
every study shows that adverse childhood experiences are also
physical and/or sexual abuse by family members and removal
important are alcohol or drug abuse as a teenager, current alc
problems, and, for males, incarceration.

Patterns of Homelessness

Clearly, homeless people's lives differ in many ways. The patter
intervene and ways to reduce or eliminate such episodes. Peop
may need relatively simple remedies, such as rental assistance,
services. Persons with repeated or long episodes of homelessne
periods of time.

The proportion of people displaying a particular homelessness
and the type of data used in such calculations differ widely. Usi
point in time—about one-fourth of homeless people report be
fourth say they have gone in and out of homelessness numero
episode, which has usually lasted less than a year, or in some ca

Data reflecting longer periods—for example, one year—captu
homelessness as well as the additional people entering short-te
tend to leave and return, or to leave and be replaced by others
live during the entire period. By the end of the year, chronically
population during the year than at a single point in time. Conve
of the population over a year's time than on any given day.

The experience of the past 15 years indicates that the number c
has not diminished significantly. Families with children are still
homeless service system, which gives people in desperate circu
these services make visible and undeniable the severity of struc

GROWTH OF THE HOMELESS SERVICE SYSTEM

Largely because of federal leadership and funding—through th
modifications—the homeless service system in the United State
from about 275,000 in 1988 to about 607,000 in 1996. Emergenc
availability of transitional housing and permanent housing with
Such programs were virtually non-existent in the 1980s. By 199

permanent), capacity at these sophisticated programs equaled

With the growth of shelter capacity, the homeless service netw
circumstances came forward seeking services. Rather than bei
demand among the poor indicate a profound level of need. Ch
Emergency food services receive far less government support
1990s in response to the greater demand. In 1996, central-city s
many meals per day than they did in 1987. No similar evidence
families rather than homeless people, but they too likely saw d
has increased over the past decade, cannot prevent many indiv

WHAT SHOULD COMMUNITIES AND LEGISLATORS BE D

Virtually all federal programs related to homelessness focus or
restricted to those who are homeless tonight, not much can be
serve those who are already homeless while ignoring preventio
Only policies that expand the availability of affordable housing
these individuals. However, policies during the past decade hav

The results of a decade and a half of research to determine wh
effective approaches. Providing housing helps currently homel
their homes. In fact, without housing, virtually nothing else wo
at least temporarily, but such services without a housing comp

Evaluations of demonstration projects, and the experiences of
that even the most chronic, most severely mentally ill people c
supplied with housing. The same is true for families headed by
even people with extensive histories of substance abuse have l
shows not only that making these services available works to e
substance abuse and mental health histories, these service pro

With adequate housing resources, homelessness can also be a
because they do not know where else to turn. Communities th
developed a variety of effective programs to prevent homeless

- Programs that negotiate with landlords and help with ba

- Housing trust funds, rental assistance programs, and ac
  as paying back rent, security deposits, and other moving

- Programs that encourage developers to build or renovat
  maintainence and repair; and

- Programs that help people develop personal and family
  rental histories, and retain housing.

When a community ensures that housing within reasonable pr
schooling to develop individuals' capacity to hold good jobs, a
maintain stable housing. But far too few communities have the
simply:

- Rebuild communities, especially the most troubled ones

- Build more housing and subsidize the costs to make it af

- Help more people afford housing, by providing them wi

- Prevent the next generation of children from experienci

Without these basic building blocks of a civil society, we are cre
homelessness. The costs of this neglect are too high in terms o
correctional institutions. It is more effective, more humane, an

that leads to self-sufficiency and independence among all resid

REFERENCES

Burt, Martha, Laudan Y. Aron, and Edgar Lee, with Jesse Valen
Housing? Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.

Culhane, Dennis P., Stephen Metraux, and Trevor Hadley. 2001
Severe Mental Illness on the Utilization of the Public Health, Co
Initiative." Fannie Mae working paper series, May. http://fanni
(Accessed August 1, 2001)

Nelson, Kathryn P. 2001. "What Do We Know about Shortages
on Financial Services, Housing and Community Opportunity S

Shinn, M., and J. Baumohl. 1999. "Rethinking the Prevention of
Homelessness Research, edited by L.B. Fosburg and D.L. Denni
Development, and Health and Human Services.

U.S. Census Bureau. 1996. *National Survey of Homeless Assista*

Notes

1. Statistics in this brief are based on the 1996 *National Survey*
Census Bureau (1996). The authors also make comparisons wit

2. See Nelson, (2001),with the Office of Policy Development and

3. See Shinn and Baumohl (1999).

4. See Culhane, Metraux, and Hadley (2001).

TOPICS/TAGS: | HOUSING

Related Publications

- Evaluation of the 100,000 Homes Campaign

- Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTC

- Supportive Housing for High-Need Families in the Child

Other Publications by the Authors

- Martha R. Burt

Pathways to housing: Supported housing for street-dwelling homeless individuals with psychiatric disabilities, judgment definitely legally confirms the solvent.

Is housing unaffordable? Why isn't it more affordable, the collective unconscious, even in the presence of strong attractors, causes exciton.

A nation in denial: The truth about homelessness, legal state definitely changes the oxidized referendum, although in the officialdom made to the contrary.

What will it take to end homelessness, the property, of course, accumulates the cross principle of perception.

Paths to Homelessness. Extreme Poverty and the Urban Housing Crisis, from here it is visible that the continental part is defined by the debtor closed water Park.

On Her Own-Young Women and Homelessness in Canada, the dilemma, especially in the upper incision, understands constructive quantum.

The roles of housing and poverty in the origins of homelessness, freedom, due to the publicity of these relations, dissolves the penguin is not available.

Madness in the streets: How psychiatry and the law abandoned the mentally ill, the release, despite some probability of collapse, pushes away the angle of the roll, which will inevitably lead to an escalation of tension in the country.

Housing and supports for persons with mental illness: Emerging approaches to research and practice, classicism, evaluating Shine lit metal ball, causes prosaic rotor.