

Who are the Homeless?

Demographics

Two trends are largely responsible for the rise in homelessness over the past 20-25 years, A growing shortage of affordable rental housing and a simultaneous increase in poverty.

Age

Children under the age of 18 accounted for 39 % of the homeless population
42% of these children were under the age of five

Gender

Single men represent 43% of the homeless
Single women represent 17%

Ethnicity

49% of the homeless population is African American
35% of the homeless population is Caucasian
13% of the homeless population is Hispanic
2% is Native American
1%..... is Asian

Persons with Mental Illness

Approximately 22% of the single adult homeless population suffers from some form of severe and persistent mental illness

Employment

Declining wages have put housing out of reach for many workers, more than the minimum wage is required to afford a one-or two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. In fact the median state minimum wage worker would have to work 89 hours each week to afford a two bedroom apartment at 30% of his or her income , which is the federal of affordable housing

Why Are People homeless?

Poverty

Poverty and homelessness are inextricably linked. Difficult choices must be made when limited resources cover some of your necessities(food, childcare, housing, healthcare) Being poor means being an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from living on the street.

In 2004, 12.7% of the U.S. population or 37 million people live in poverty

Declining Work Opportunities

While the last few years have seen growth in real wages at all levels, these increase have not been enough to counteract a long pattern of stagnant and declining wages.

To compound the problem, the minimum wage in 2004 was 26% less than in 1979.

Factors that contributing to wage declines include a steep drop in the number and bargaining power of unionized workers, a decline in manufacturing jobs and the corresponding expansion lower paying service-sector employment, and globalization.

Declining wages have in turn 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 market value.

The connection between impoverished workers and homelessness can be seen in homeless shelters, many of which house significant numbers of full time wages earned. A survey of 24 U.S. cities found that 15% of persons in homeless situation are employed.

Facts on Homelessness

How do we define homelessness?

A person who is homeless does not have a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This person may be sleeping on the streets, with friends or family, in cars or abandoned buildings or in shelters.

How many people are homeless in Philadelphia?

It is very difficult to accurately determine how many people are homeless. It is estimated that there are approximately 4,000 persons who are homeless on any given day in Philadelphia. This includes only those who are in shelters or on the streets. It does not include those who are in transitional housing, low-demand residences, or in substandard/unfit living conditions.

In 2005, the City's Office of Emergency Shelter and Services served 14,986 homeless people (including both single adults and family members) through its emergency shelter system. Of this number, 9,468 were adults without children, 2,011 were heads of households, and 3,507 were children.

Approximately 20 percent of the single individuals and 13 percent of the families were "chronically homeless" (homeless for one year or longer or four episodes of homelessness in three years).

Who is homeless in Philadelphia?

Homelessness disproportionately affects persons of color, with over 80 percent African-American, about 15 percent White.

Children in families constitute approximately a third of the shelter population on any given night. Persons under the age of 18 are the most common shelter users. xx percent of families entering shelter were single-parent households (86 percent of these were female-headed and 14 percent were male-headed).

Age distribution of single individuals in shelter was as follows:

Age
Percentage
18-25=9
26-45=49
46-65=40
65+=3

Racial distribution of persons in shelter was as follows:

Race/Ethnicity
Percentage
African-American=80
Latino/a=6
White=13
Asian-American>1
Other>3

What about the people on the streets?

Although the most visible segment of the homeless population are those persons living on the streets, they are at most 10 percent of the total homeless population.

In 2005, the highest number of persons on the streets was 505 (August); the lowest was 176 (January). In 1997, evening counts of the street population in Philadelphia showed an all-time high of 824 persons on the streets in the summer and between 170 and 300 in the winter. During the summer, many shelters close, which forces people to live outside and during the winter, colder weather and "Code Blue" days bring more people into shelter. These counts do not include the almost uncountable number of persons living in obscure park areas, vehicles, or abandoned houses.

What causes homelessness?

Poverty from a lack of good jobs and minimal government assistance
Lack of affordable housing and inadequate housing assistance
Lack of affordable health care
Domestic violence
Mental Illness
Substance Abuse

How do we end homelessness?

Develop effective solutions for those on the street including targeted outreach and appropriate facilities and services, particularly for persons with substance-abuse and mental-health problems.

Strengthen the system of shelter and services that enable homeless persons to make the transition to stability and job readiness.

Provide permanent solutions— jobs and housing—so that people can break the cycle of homelessness and become stable and productive citizens.

Strengthen homelessness prevention programs so that no one ends up in shelters or on the streets. This includes reinvesting in economically vulnerable neighborhoods; improving the school system; making sure people have access to health care; and providing jobs at a living wage.